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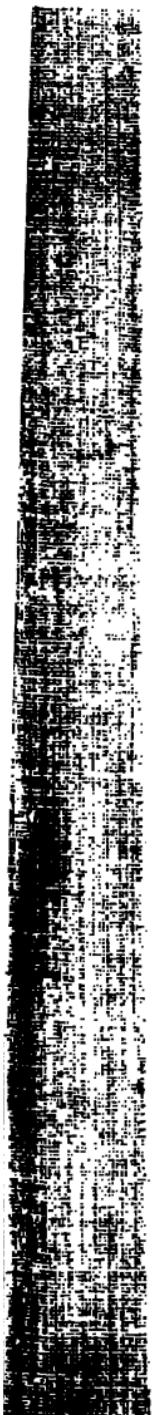
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BOY'S COUNTRY-BOOK.

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Paternoster Row.

THE
BOY'S COUNTRY-BOOK:
BEING
THE REAL LIFE OF A COUNTRY BOY,
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF;
EXHIBITING ALL THE AMUSEMENTS, PLEASURES, AND
PURSUITS OF CHILDREN IN THE COUNTRY.



EDITED BY
WILLIAM HOWITT,
AUTHOR OF "THE RURAL LIFE OF ENGLAND," "VISITS TO
REMARKABLE PLACES," ETC.

SECOND EDITION.

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Away they scamper full of sport, away,
With careless minds intend on various play;
Huzza!—a long and sunny holiday!
Some, the projected racing-match decide;
Some strut on stilts with ill-dissembled pride;
Some play the truant wandering far and wide,
Exploring, fearful of each distant sound,
The simple wonders of the country round.

Maude's School Boy.



CHAPTER I.

SKETCH OF MY LIFE; IN WHICH ARE BRIEFLY RELATED
SUNDRY PARTICULARS HEREAFTER TO BE
MORE FULLY DWELT UPON.

IT has been of late years very fashionable to write the lives and times of eminent people, to the great gratification of our full-grown friends; now I don't see any reason why we boys and girls should not write lives and times of our own; and rather to set a good example than because it is so much more important than that of other boys,—for I think almost every lad's life, if it were well written, would have in it very interesting particulars,—I am determined to write mine.

I was born on the borders of the Peak of Derbyshire. My father was a man of property, who was engaged in collieries, and had besides a fancy for all sorts of mining concerns. In the village which we inhabited there were two or three good families, but unfortunately for me, there were no children in them. There were several farmers too, but they were exactly in the same predicament, so that my own brothers being so much older as to be at distant schools, or much too young to be field-playfellows, I was thrown in a great measure upon the children of the cottagers for companions; and this was rather a dangerous situation in two respects. I was in a fair way to contract all their vulgarities, without gaining much information beyond that country knowledge which is the peculiar property of all boys,—knowledge of all sorts of sports, mischief, climbing, rabbit-keeping, birds'-nesting, fishing, and such-like things. It was still more dangerous by making me a superior, likely to be flattered and sought after, without any playfellows of equal pretensions, whose self-will would place itself sturdily in opposition to my own, and tend to keep down pride and notions of self-importance. It was a perilous pre-eminence. However, of all this I never thought then, and to me the society of peasants was quite as good as that of princes. They were bold, active lads, full of life and overflowing spirits, and that was enough. Perhaps they were, in reality, rather more agreeable from the secret feeling that they were all my humble servants. Well, we had a happy time of it; and I have had brunts and emulation enough since that period to cut down any overweening ideas which this short rural kingship might have given me. It should be understood too, here, that in that retired part of the country a great simplicity of mind and manners prevailed; all the inhabitants

of that little hamlet were as well acquainted with each other as the branches of many families are in some places; they and their ancestors had lived in a very primitive familiarity for generations, and they were, for the most part, very worthy and honest people. My parents, who never ceased to watch over my proceedings and acquaintance, had not the fear of evil communication from my comrades, which in the neighbourhood of large towns and cities would have prevented altogether my associating with them.

My father's house was a large, old-fashioned place, with long, dark passages, wide halls, half-a-dozen staircases, with closets and hiding-holes under them that were awful to my young imagination, with a step up or a step down to every room in the house. The parlours were hung with ancient tapestry, and the chambers with paper of large patterns—scriptural scenes and pastoral scenes, flocks of sheep, and shepherds and shepherdesses, and haymakers, with rakes and forks almost as long as real ones; and dressing-rooms with paper all covered with birds of Paradise—such creatures as were never seen in Paradise or out of it, with tails that were curiously linked to the heads of their neighbours, and sitting on fanciful pedestals, with scroll-like feet running here and there, till the whole pattern was an inextricable entanglement. One side of the house was all glazed, having at some remote time evidently formed a conservatory; and thence might be seen a large old-fashioned wilderness of a garden, bounded by a dark orchard and pond. The house had, beside, the reputation of being haunted; but I shall leave its ghosts, to attend to its real flesh-and-blood neighbours.

The top of the garden was divided from the street by a row of houses belonging to my father, the tenants of

which must have been curious people. The one living next to us was Molly Hodgkinson, a schoolmistress, a very testy woman, who was my dread. Our pigeons used to contrive to get into the roof over her bed-room, and wake her too early in the morning. I have seen her rush into our house as we have sat at breakfast, like one possessed, and with a variety of tragic action cry—"There sir! there sir! no sleep have I had since midnight for those pigeons again! I must go, or they must go! Life cannot bear it, sir! no, life cannot bear it! I would rather hear the roaring of a lion than the *coorooing* of those pigeons!" At which my father would smile, and very calmly say he would do his best to prevent their annoying her. On one occasion I was busy with a roadmaker's hammer, trying to smash a pebble before her house, when out she came, exclaiming—"Ay, ay! you can break a stone, but can you *make* a stone?" My habitual fear of her, the energy of her action, fixing her wild eyes on me, and then suddenly going in and shutting the door after her, made me pause, and first impressed me with the perception that there was wisdom in the formation of a common pebble.

The next neighbour was old Tommy Hall—so we called him—a tall, thin man, who prided himself on his being born and bred a gentleman; but who, having spent all his property in gambling, racing, and hunting, had retired to this secluded village with the wreck of his fortune, some few shillings a week, and lived by himself in a house of two rooms. Gentleman as he was, however, he was very fond of new-laid eggs, and whenever he heard the hens cackling in our yard opposite, he made a speedy visit there, and whoever went after him was sure to find empty nests. His neighbour was a good old woman, Mary Kater, who lived in a house of a single room, where she often assem-

bled her friends to a prayer-meeting, for she belonged to that most useful religious body the Methodists, and we used to peep through the space left by her window curtain on such occasions, and I *then* wondered at the zealous gestures and fervent zeal of herself and friends.

But the house of all houses was the next. It was that of a poor widow, old Sally Garner. It was a small cottage, with a brick floor as worn and uneven as need be. A few crazy chairs, a table, and a wooden couch called a squab, were her principal furniture; with her loom, or stocking-frame; the making of silk and cotton stockings being a great trade in that part of the country. By hard daily labour in this frame she earned bread for herself and three or four children, one of whom, her son Joe, was a great crony of mine. Here we played all sorts of pranks, and enjoyed ourselves to our hearts' content, for the good-natured woman let us do just as we pleased. We made key-guns by filing touch-holes in the backs of great keys, tying them to sticks, charging them with gunpowder, ramming it down with all our might, and letting it off with a fire-stick or a hot cinder. There was a stone block at the door, in which we used to drill holes and ram them full of powder, driving in after it wooden plugs, till, when we applied fire to it, which we took good care to do by making a long train so as to be out of danger, it would go off with a blast that shook the whole house, and threatened to smash all the windows, and bring the roof in. Poor Sally Garner would run out in her fright, and declare that we should drive her crazed, but the next moment she would mount her loom and forget our offences.

The last house in the row was that of Tom Newton the barber, several of whose sons were also our companions, and beyond his house was a sort of open down, on which

lay a parcel of huge rocks as large as houses, tumbled, as it would seem, out of the sky. These we called the rocks of Gibraltar; and we climbed and capered about on them in such a manner, that I now wonder we did not break our necks.

These, and other such urchins, were a regiment always at my command; with them I traversed fields and woods: birds'-nesting—rabbit-catching—fishing—and even shooting with a great rusty horse-pistol;—it is a thousand marvels that it never burst and blew out our brains. Such a crew of ragged, resolute lads seldom, if ever, were under the despotic command of one happy boy. To me, what were their rags, and their dirty faces?—I thought not of them. Joe Garner's hat, the crown of which generally resembled a pot-lid, hanging only by a piece flapping to and fro; sometimes falling behind and shewing his rough head of hair, or, much oftener, a good wisp of hay thrust into it, was as handsome in my sight as the best and newest of beavers. These lads are now scattered about, and fast growing into men; but they will always live in my memory in the very shapes of their boyish figures.

There was nothing that usually attracts the attention of boys that escaped us. Many a summer evening we went round the village with a ladder, visiting the eaves of almost every cottage, and even of the church itself, for sparrows' nests. The eggs, young ones, and even the old birds, that we sometimes caught on their nests, we sold according to a parish custom, to the overseer of the poor. Three eggs for a penny, two young birds for a penny, and one old bird's head for the same price; a hedgehog for fourpence, and a weasel for a shilling, because they are reckoned to do great mischief to the farmers; an accusation only too well founded against the weasel, which sucks prodigious quantities of eggs,

and destroys vast numbers of chickens and rabbits, but so far as the poor hedgehog is concerned most unjust.

This parish custom, and the ignorance of many of the parish officers, led to great abuses, and it is well that the custom is done away with. It tempted many lads to practise a piece of trickery which might lead them to further attempts at dishonesty. It was reckoned a good joke with many of them to watch the parish officer after they had sold him a quantity of sparrows and their eggs, for it was not unusual for him, when the lads appeared to be out of sight, to throw the sparrows into the street; having observed this, they would go presently and pick them up, and sell them two or three times over; and some lads have been known to put amongst them the heads of hedge-sparrows, buntings, and larks, for which the parish allowed nothing, but which the overseer did not always know from real sparrows.

But let us leave these young impostors, and follow a more honest company. At the head of my crew of village ragamuffins, my adroitness became so celebrated for miles round, that if there were a crow's or a hawk's nest in some place that defied all the efforts of the other lads to come at it, I must be fetched to master the difficulty. I climbed rocks and trees, and was held by the heels over old coal-pits sixty yards deep, in pursuit of such things, so often that it seems only by some special providence that I escaped with life.

I remember on one occasion, a boy brought what he called a tree-fox's tail into the village, with a wonderful story that there were hundreds of them growing on the roots of trees by a certain pond. It was then evening—the pond was some miles off—but away we went, and in the last glimmering of twilight arrived at the place. It was a deep, dark lake, surrounded by woods; the foxes' tails

were the roots of willows, that, growing in the water, had put out thousands of fine fibres, which really much resembled foxes' brushes. While getting these treasures, a water-hen flew from her nest in a little sedgy island near, with a rushing sound, which in that silent solitude at first terribly startled us, but in another moment, only filled us with a flaming desire to seize the nest. To get at it, the only way appeared to be, to pass along the trunk of a long slender willow that hung over the water, when, on the instant I grasped the nest, snap went the willow, and plunged me headlong into the dismal lake. The boughs of the tree bore me up for a moment, and in that moment my bold followers seized the lower end of the tree, and dragged it, me, and the nest safely to land. Had I parted from the tree, I had certainly been drowned; but with our foxes' tails and water-hen's nest we jogged home, and never troubled ourselves for a moment about the danger I had escaped.

Thus passed some years, as it would seem, in considerable wildness and danger; but, as I have observed, my parents knew very well the characters of the boys I associated with, and as to the danger, that I believe to be more apparent than real. The skill, activity, and adroitness which country boys acquire by the daily habits of running, leaping, bathing, climbing, etc., render these habits in reality little dangerous to them. You very rarely hear of any serious accidents to country lads from such habits, for in the midst of their most adventurous attempts there is the strong natural love of self-preservation at work in them; and the self-confidence, free use of their limbs, and acquaintance with a thousand common things which they acquire, and which town boys do not, place them in fact in after-life out of danger in numberless occurrences. One would think that children who live by rivers and ponds

would often be drowned, but such children seldom are. Familiarity with danger does indeed wonderfully diminish that danger. I am indeed a striking instance of this truth, for in a very active and varied life, by land and water, I never met with one serious accident, but have on many occasions had to congratulate myself on my early acquaintance with field and flood, when I have seen people otherwise courageous, lose all presence of mind in some critical moment, when they must certainly have suffered serious injury but for the assistance of myself and others of similar early habits.

How few country huntsmen ever meet with severe hurts in comparison with those who have spent their early lives in town, and learned horsemanship only in riding-schools. You rarely hear of a shooter being hurt by his gun, who has learned to shoot in his youth in the country; almost as certainly as townsmen go out on a shooting expedition, they either shoot themselves or their companions. Their guns not being properly cleaned or kept from wet, burst, and shatter their hands; or they go through hedges with their guns cocked, when a branch catches the trigger and shoots the person just before them; or they take the gun from their companion who has yet to come over; they receive it by the muzzle, the same accident occurs, and they themselves are shot. Such things never can happen to the sportsman who has had a country education. A certain hardihood and daring acquired in boyish country life, are often the harbingers of future destination. The celebrated Lord Clive, when a simple village lad, was found astride on a spout on the top of the church steeple. The story of Lord Nelson's laddish wanderings in the country, when he was asked by his uncle if he had no fear of strolling so far, and his reply, that "he never saw

fear," is well known. I do not mean however to advocate rashness in children, or carelessness in parents; a watchfulness on the part of parents and guardians is always necessary, and every child should be taught not to run wilfully into peril; but it seemed right for me here to intimate that undue caution and overweening fearfulness are equally erroneous, as producing timidity of character, or ignorance of much that is of inestimable value. What a world of knowledge and of beautiful ideas we should have lost had not Shakspeare rambled about the country in his boyhood!

But enough of this digression. During this period, I and my village comrades had various kinds of amusement. At one time we spent whole days in making bricks of clay in the bow of a mole-trap, calling them shoe-heel bricks, which they resembled, and baking them in little kilns, intending to build a wall, and cope it with those bricks. At another, we burnt bones in a little kiln which we built in our garden, and half-poisoned the whole village with the smell; at another time we haunted the joiner's shop, chipping and boring, and endangering our toes and fingers; at another, the smith's forge was our attraction. There we hammered hot iron, blew the bellows, and admired the whole process of paring horses' hoofs and setting on shoes, but more especially the beautiful starry sparks which fly about when the hot iron is drawn from the fire. Many a day of a cold winter did I pass by the pleasant blaze of this forge, delighting in its cheerful light, and in all the curious operations going on, such as making chains, and sharpening ploughshares, and so on; and many a day, of a cold winter too, did I sit cross-legged on the board of a good-natured tailor, making pincushions of red and yellow strips of cloth, and feeling it very important to be able to sew with a bottomless thimble. The tailor was six feet

high; had a nose flattened to his face by a blow received in a good-natured effort to part some quarrelers; and must have been a very ugly fellow, but I never thought of that; to me his kindness made him comely, as I believe is the case with all children: and I once went a whole summer day's journey, on foot, with him to see his mother—a distance which, in my memory, seems immense; but of which I recollect nothing but passing over some large commons, on which were many asses and cows, and dining from a piece of beef, baked in a dish of old-fashioned ware, full of brown and yellow zigzags.

But now came a new era in my life. My father had a clerk, who lived in the house. This young man was a curiosity. At night he was conjuring, drawing circles and triangles on the kitchen hearth with cinders, and muttering strange words, till he half-frightened the maids out of their wits. By three o'clock the next morning, even in winter, he would be up reading his Bible aloud by the same kitchen fire till six, when the maids coming down, he would retire to his office; and in the day-time, if he had any leisure, he would run off with me a shooting; or, if it were dry weather, would play at marbles with me. A stranger medley of a man was never seen. He had often to go to the coal-pits, and I used to go with him. He had the faculty of exciting my imagination to the greatest degree. Every thing we saw he clothed in fairy colours. This was Humble-bee Hall—that was Tom Thumb's Castle; and the next field was Dead-man's Field, where some strange murder had been committed; and that was the Wood of the Web-footed Witches, some awful creatures I never before or since heard of. One house was haunted, or had a murdered infant buried under the floor; or was inhabited by a miser, or a murderer, or a thief, or had been a madhouse.

The whole country, by his description, was full of terror and mystery ; and yet, in the strange eloquence of his language, now all sad and solemn, now all joke and merriment, it had to me a wild and bewitching delight.

Never shall I forget one time. We came, in our way to the pits, to a hollow on the heath. It was a green and grassy hollow, like a great bowl, over which grew large trees. "Let us sit down here," said this strange young man. Scarcely had we done so, when a cloud, as of night, fell over his countenance : he began to rock to and fro, to sigh and lament ; and, at length, wringing his hands and shedding tears profusely, he declared himself the most miserable of mortals ; that every sin, save murder, he had committed, and had no hope in heaven or in earth. I started up in horror, and felt a cold shudder run through every limb ; but in a moment more he wiped away his tears, rose up, took me by the hand, begged me never to reveal his weakness, and went on laughing, and talking as wildly as ever. The character of this unhappy mortal I can now understand, though I then did not. With talents that might have led him to great distinction and happiness, for want of a sound adherence to the truth, and of a firm resistance to temptation, he involved himself in alternate sin, and bitter remorse, for his feelings were very quick ; and finally his impetuous passions brought on him a fearful fate. In his very boyhood he practised duplicity, which grew upon him till it destroyed him. When a mere boy, being sent by his grandmother on a valuable horse, in great haste, for a physician for one of the family taken suddenly ill, and being reluctant to go, he dismounted as soon as out of sight, daubed himself and the face and knees of the horse with mud, and came back pretending that the horse had fallen with him and severely hurt him. The trick

answered his immediate purpose, whilst it caused the sale of a most valuable horse; but it, no doubt, at the same time, encouraged him to proceed in a course which fatally punished him in the end. Here let us leave him altogether, having only mentioned him in this place as the cause of my frequently visiting the collieries.





CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH THE SCENE CHANGES, AND PETER SCROGGINS,
THE PONY, MAKES HIS APPEARANCE.

To go to the collieries I had a little grey pony, called Peter Scroggins, which, if my memory is to be believed, was one of the most compact, active, handsome, clever, and yet good-tempered and gentle creatures that ever lived. Where he sprung from I cannot tell; I only remember that, to my great joy, my father took me and shewed him to me in the stable, and said "there my boy, what do you think of that for a nag? Come, mount him, and let us see how you can manage him." Whereupon he forthwith took down from the wall a span-new little saddle, which I had

been as little aware of as of the pony itself, and placing it himself on the little horse's back, he buckled up the pair of nice new white girths, and then took down as beautiful a new bridle, and having put it on, led Peter to the door, and bade me mount,—which I need not say I did in quick time.

Here some cautious people will say, “but could you ride?” That will presently be seen; for without further ceremony, clapping my heels to his sides, and giving Peter a gentle cut with a new whip which I found as marvellously in my hand, up the village street we went at a brave rate, amid the wonder of many a simple neighbour. Having gone, as it were on swallow's wings, about a mile and back again, I found my father and mother, and old Samuel Davis the groom, who had lived in the house as long as I knew anything of it, and a dozen other of the villagers standing together, who had a score of wonders and notes of admiration to make; while my father said, “here, Will, you may dismount again now. I see you and Peter will agree very well together: so give him to Samuel Davis till you want him.”

And pretty often you may believe I did want him. I found occasion to ride a hundred ways, and on a hundred errands. First, Peter wanted riding in a morning for exercise; and then the cows wanted fetching up, and I might just as well do it; and then my mother *must* want *some* message carried *somewhere*; and there wanted some errand to the collieries; in short, Samuel Davis began soon to ask me whether I did not want Peter to ride up stairs to bed with; and whether he should not bring him for me to ride down to breakfast in a morning?

Having shewn that I could ride, I suppose some people will now want to know how I learned to ride. We will

talk of that anon ; at present we have some other things to relate. It is just now enough that I felt myself a famous man, with a pony of my own, and liberty to ride him when and where I would.

I first saw the coal-pits by night. As I rode over a hill I suddenly perceived before me, in every direction, strange lights, that only seemed to make the darkness deeper. Melancholy sounds, as of groans and sighings, and wild lamentings, came upon my ear, and fell awfully upon my heart. I could perceive by the fires, that blazed here and there in a hundred places, that a wild landscape was before me ; and Burman, the young man I have mentioned, told me it was full of coal-pits ; that these fires were burning by them ; and that the sounds I heard were the sounds of the machinery by which the coal was drawn up, and of the steam-engines by which the pits were cleared of water. As we went on we soon approached one of the coal-pits, and a wild scene it was. In two or three tall cressets fires were flaming and flickering in the wind ; on the ground other large fires were burning, and by their light I could see black figures standing or moving about. Around were other paler fires, that with a smothered force seemed burning dimly, and every now and then breaking up with a stream of flame, and then dying away again : The flames gleamed ruddily on the colliers ; on their great wailing wheels and tall timbers ; and on the immense stacks of coals that stood around. It required daylight and further acquaintance with the place and people to dispel my awe. When these came, and I had looked about me, I discovered many objects of interest. I found that the smothered fires that I had seen were coke fires ; that is, fires in which they burn the soft coal to coke or mineral charcoal, in the same way that in the forests they burn wood into charcoal by

piling it up in heaps, covering it up from the air, and letting it burn without flames, by which it is made useful for burning in chafing-dishes, for the purposes of many kinds of mechanics, and for the drying kilns of millers, maltsters, etc. I found the pits awful circulars gulphs of some yards wide, and of an immense depth; some sixty or seventy yards, others as much as two hundred yards. A terrible place one of these pits seemed to me, far more than those old forsaken ones where I had gone to seek birds'-nests, because those were half concealed with bushes; and these standing wide open to the day, I shuddered to see the colliers go near them, much more to see them seat themselves on a single chain, hook it to the end of the huge rope that hung over this terrible chasm, and suffer themselves to be thus let down to the bottom.

These pits were very old fashioned pits. They were not worked by steam-engines, which in those days merely drew water, but by which the coals are now whirled up, and the men are whirled down with a fearful speed. They were worked only by a huge wheel, with one end of its axle on the earth, and the other fixed to the beam above. This wheel, which they call a gin, was turned round by a couple of horses; and a large rope uncoiling one way as it coiled the other round the gin, drew up the coal, and let down the chain for more at the same time. At the mouth of the pit a man stood with an iron hook, and as the coal came up piled on a sledge called a cauf, and secured by wooden frames called garlands, he seized the ring in the end of the cauf and drew the coal to land. At one of these pits a girl once performed this office, and missing her foot as she approached the pit mouth to hook the load of coal, plunged headlong into the pit and was dashed to pieces. But what was the most sad of all was, that the person who was the

first at the bottom to hear her fall, and who came and found the mangled corpse, was her own father.

On every pit-hill as they call it, that is on the mound that surmounts the pit made by the earth thrown out in digging it, the colliers have a cabin, often built of coal. In this they keep a good fire in cold weather, and here when they have done their work they often sit and drink ale and make merry. A rude and uncouth crew they look; yet I found them a very honest, good-natured set of fellows; and I delighted to sit on a great coal with them, and hear them tell their country stories, of which they have abundance, and "many a random shot of country wit." One very odd custom they have, and that is giving a nickname to every workman; and what is odder still, this is said to be the custom in every part of the country where there are colliers. You might live amongst them for months before you would get to hear their real names. You would hear them calling one another only by such names as these:—Stump, Swimp, Drummer, Old Soul, Moon-eye, Gentleman Tom, Bogard Tom (Bogard is a ghost), Old Strokes, Two-Powers, Kettle-bender, and Crack-a-marble. These were names all known to me; and what is as singular, everybody and everything was called *old*: mere lads, dogs, cats, horses, or anything that they spoke of familiarly were old. It was a term not expressive of age, but of good fellowship.

Many a day did I use to spend amongst these black and honest mortals. I used to climb upon their stacks of coals, that extended far and wide, a sable wilderness, and there I found many a treasure of wagtails' nests. At length I mustered courage to go down a pit—yes, down one of those dreadful gulphs of which no bottom could be seen, but up which came a thin blue vapour, and a sound of falling

waters. I was arrayed in a flannel frock, such as the colliers all wear, lent me by a pit-boy, and a round crowned hat without brim, well stuffed with hay. In this guise a collier seated himself on the chain, and taking me on his knee, we were swung off over the pit-mouth. Oh! it was a terrible moment, and made me sick and giddy. The rope appeared to dwindle to a hair, and below I dared not look, but I thought to what a horrible unknown depth I was going! Down, however, we went. Around us gushed water from the bricks which lined the side of the pit, and fell with a dreary, splashing sound, far, far below. Anon, I looked up—the daylight appeared only a small, circular, intense speck, like a star above me; and presently I heard below human voices sounding deeply like echoes. To my vast delight we soon felt the solid ground beneath us. A collier unhooked my protector from his chain, and we stood at the entrance of a region of darkness.

What a wild, gloomy, and strange scene! A black cavern of immense extent was before me, shewn by a few glimmering lights. We went on a good way; when, suddenly, I saw two rows of lights burning, one on the right the other on the left. These were the lights by which the colliers were at work getting the coal. The face of the coal where they work they call a benk. One is the deep benk, the other is the basset benk. Here the poor fellows sit on the ground, with their sharp picks, undermining a certain quantity of the coal measured and marked out with chalk, or in their language,—holing a stint. Then comes the hammer-man with his hammer, and driving his wedge in above, down comes the mass of coal, and they load it on the cauf and garlands, and a little pony draws it along a little railway to the pit-mouth, where it is drawn up for use. As the poor fellows clear away the coal, they prop the roof

up with pieces of wood, called puncheons, or the earth above them would fall in and bury them ; and this it sometimes does in spite of all their care, and they are crushed to death, or are left alive beneath the immense mass to perish of famine before their friends can dig them out.

In this black and dreary region, and in this way, are the coals procured that make our parlours so bright and warm, and that cook all the good things in the kitchen. In these underground regions they have ponies and asses that do not see daylight for years ; and they have stables for them made of coal. What is more odd, they have abundance of rats too ; and nobody well knows how they get there. The colliers think they run down the ropes ; but I think they fall in during the night, and their bodies being light and soft, and falling into the water at the bottom, they escape being killed. There they are, however, and so ravenous that the colliers are obliged to keep their provisions and their candles, and corn for their ponies, all in iron chests, or they would quickly devour them. They will eat through a wooden box several inches thick in a few minutes, with their long, sharp teeth, so that there is no chance of keeping anything eatable but in iron. They keep cats too ; but in spite of all this you would laugh to see a troop of rats come, while the colliers are holing, and run and jump up at the lighted candles by which they are working, which they stick with a bit of clay to the face of the coal, and will snatch them down and scamper away in different directions with them burning in their mouths.

Many a peril do these poor colliers undergo. Sometimes, as I have said, the roof falls in ; sometimes, while they are working without fear of danger, a single stroke of a pick will let in a torrent of water from some secret reservoir, that will speedily fill the pit, and drown them altogether if

they do not run for their lives. Sometimes the choke-damp, called in the language of chemistry, carbonic acid gas, comes, and suffocates them, and they fall dead on the floor. To escape this, they carefully observe their candles, which burn blue on its approach, and gradually go out. Sometimes the more terrible fire-damp, the carburetted hydrogen gas of the chemical philosophers,—kindled by their candles, in a moment fills all the pit with one sheet of flame, and they perish by scores, like so many scorched insects. Sir Humphry Davy, the great chemical philosopher, invented a lamp, made of wire-gauze, by which the men may work in safety, for the fire-damp will not kindle at it; but in too many pits this excellent lamp is not used, and so the lives of numbers are lost through their masters' avarice or their own neglect.

Sometimes too, the coal in a pit will take fire, either through the kindling of this inflammable gas or some other cause, and will burn on for years like a volcano. At Wall's End, about four miles from Newcastle-on-Tyne, a vast extent of coal has been for years and still continues to be on fire; sending up a tremendous flame from the pit-mouth that at night may be seen for many miles round, and is said to throw up no less than some hundred of hogsheads of gas per minute—enough, in fact, to light up the whole town of Newcastle, if so employed. The country round Newcastle is, indeed, a most singular country. For many miles the whole is undermined with coal-pits. Steam-engines of stupendous power are there continually at work, bringing up to the surface the coals that supply not only all that part of the kingdom, but the vast city of London, and the country far round it, and which are sent into Scotland, France, and many other lands. There whole families live continually underground, and wherever you go in that

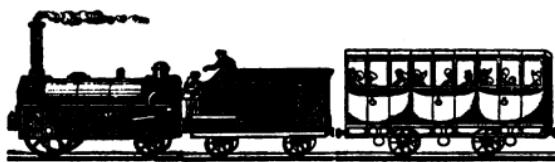
neighbourhood you see some curious thing or other connected with those immense collieries. The river Tyne is busy with vessels coming up to fetch coals, or going out with them to many distant places. As you walk in its neighbourhood you come near some vast engine working away. You see large wicker baskets of coals come rapidly out of the pit, and, as if they were alive, run off along a little railroad to the side of the water where some vessel lies, or some receiving-place is made; tilt themselves over, shooting out the coals, and then run back again empty, to be let down the pit for fresh loads. The coals are there drawn up in baskets, because every boy in London knows they are generally small, and could not be laid on *cavves* and *garlands* as in Derbyshire, and other midland counties, where the coals are found quite of a different kind, being much harder, and in large solid masses. I have seen coals in Nottinghamshire, not less than five yards long; and they require knocking in pieces with a hammer before they can be used. As you go along in the neighbourhood of the Tyne, again, you will often see a train of railway wagons come hurrying along, with neither horse nor steam-engine to draw them, but seeming to run by their own power and will. A man, indeed, stands behind, and treads on a piece of iron so contrived as to press on the wheels, and enable him to retard their motion: thus, really, having no occasion to push them on, but on the contrary, to prevent them going too fast; as if they were in a mighty hurry to see the great city of London, or set out on their travels to some foreign country. Away they go, to the water side, tilt themselves over into ship or warehouse, and away the empty wagons bustle back again.

It is one of the oddest sights in the world, and can only

be explained by observing that the railways are inclined planes, or in other words, the full wagons run *down hill*, and the empty ones are drawn back by a rope or chain attached to a steam-engine. The whole water-side seems alive with mechanical contrivances. All along the banks of the river run immense sheds called STEATHES, in which the coals are laid up safe from the weather; and in other places you see quite mountains of sand, which have been brought by ships from abroad as ballast, and which they empty out before they lay in their load of coal. And here again you see little railway wagons running up these mountains out of the ships, as if by magic, laden with this ballast, which they turn out on the top of the hill, and run down again into the ships for more. But what is the most beautiful, and wonderful sight of all, is to see huge wagons containing a ton or more of coals, come running along railways from the distant pits, which are continued into the river; and so raised on tall wooden pillars, that the end of the railway over the river is the height of a lofty house above the stream. Under the end of these railways, lie ships to be loaded; and the wagons advance, one at a time, along the railways with such rapidity that you expect to see them run off the end of the high railway, for there seems nothing to stop them, and fall headlong into the Tyne. But you behold with admiration, that at the moment the carriage is expected by you to fall, it is received by a sort of frame that parts from the end of the railway, and lets the wagon with its load gently down to the deck of the vessel, where a man standing, knocks out a pin; the bottom of the wagon drops down, the coals are precipitated into the hold of the ship, and the empty wagon, soaring up again through the air as gently as it came down, once more reaches the railway, and com-

pletes its marvellous exploits by running up the railway, and out of sight, as by a living impulse.

Such are a few of the many curious inventions by which the coal that we see blazing in every house in the metropolis is raised from the earth, and safely deposited in the vessels that convey it to different ports and countries. And these, and many others which make Newcastle and its neighbourhood very interesting to the curious mind, are even exceeded by the scenes under ground. But these things would require a volume to themselves. I must return to my own history.





CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH I AND PETER SCROGGINS BECOME TRAVELLERS,
AND JOURNEY INTO THE PEAK.

THE time came for me to extend my rides beyond the collieries. On my grey pony, Peter Scroggins, I first accompanied my father to his mines in the Peak,—that land of mountains and of many wonders. The beauty of the country was always delightful to me. Even as I strolled about birds'-nesting, the freshness of early morning, the sun coming up the sky, filling it with all lovely colours and with heavenly cheerfulness; the bright dewdrops

hanging on every bush, and scattered glitteringly over the young grass; the sweet odour of leaves and flowers; the violets, primroses, and cowslips coming out in their own time,—filled me with a speechless joy. The aspect of dark woods and waters, the tall trees with their deep sighing sound; the cries and appearance of all sorts of birds and little wild animals; these were the things that kindled my imagination, and led me often many miles from home. But when I got into the Peak, I could not sleep for joy and wonder. Such mighty towering rocks, crowned with hanging thickets and woods! such clear, swift rivers rushing along beneath them! such wild high hills, and far-stretching uplands! such mighty ranges, as it appeared to me, of dark forests!—I was never tired of gazing on them. At one time we came upon an old hall, grey with age, amid its old, old trees. Then we turned aside into a winding road, and seemed at once to come into a new land. Here lay a sweet village, built in a hollow, all surrounded by high rocks, from the top of which hung wild drooping boughs and plants. The houses all appeared so neat and clean, the church so beautiful, surrounded by its lime trees; the parsonage, with its little front garden-walks all formed of the small white gravel procured from the mines, and its collection of beautiful spars and minerals ranged on the window-sills outside. All was so comfortable and quiet that I loved the very sight of it. And then, the waters of the mountain river went rushing along so abundantly through the place, turning several kinds of mills, that it seemed, unlike our own quiet streams, to riot in its own abundance. And as I followed my father silently up the ascending road on my grey pony, such scenes opened before me as I never dreamed were to be seen in this world. The rocks on one hand went stretching away till

they made a sudden turn, at one which resembled exactly an old castle tower; and at their feet there appeared a broad walk of natural grass between them and the river, so green, and soft, and smooth, no king's garden ever looked so pleasant; and the river was so clear, and sent up such a softened roar that it was both like a picture and like music.

On the other hand, again, I looked, and behold there were two long pleasant valleys with smaller streams winding along them, and old men fishing in them, and wild rocks scattered about, and quiet villages, and one old hall so lonely and retired that I fancied it must be inhabited by some old knight of the Peak that had never heard of any other land, or been heard of there. I thought nothing could be so delightful as to live here, and run all about those sweet places, and get a peep at that old knight from behind a rock or a tree, as he went out on his strong horse with all his merry men hunting.

But my father jogged on, and I must jog on after him; and now we came to great wide heaths, on which nothing but a few sheep were to be seen; and then to wild plains, only divided by stone walls; and, amid these dreary, desolate plains, amongst a few scattered and storm-dashed trees, we discovered three or four solitary men at work, among heaps of that same whitish kind of small stone with which the parsonage walks were made. And this was a mine! How different from the coal mines! Here were no great gins set up, but merely a wallow and turngrains, just such a thing as a bucket is drawn out of a well with; and here two men, with faces quite purple with exposure to the mountain winds, were drawing up a large bucket full of that whitish gravel, which others washed in great tubs at a circular pool to get the lead ore out of it. It seemed to me a sad dreary place and business. There were no great

stacks of coals and fires, but those little mountains of this small white stone, which they had thrown out of the mines; no great, dark pit, but merely one just like a well; and in some places nothing but a mere hole in the ground, or in a hill side, or a nook, like a great fox-hole, into which a man went; for the lead ore does not lie in flat beds like coal, but runs in long winding veins up and down, to and fro, through the bowels of the mountains, as if at random, and so the men follow it wherever it leads. Sometimes it goes down, and then they dig after it, and drive strong stakes, which they call stencils, into the side of the pit as they go, to aid them in climbing up and down. It appeared very odd to me, to observe them running up and down the side of the pit like rats, holding by mere stakes, instead of going down by a good strong rope, as in the coal mines. Sometimes the vein of metal runs through the hardest rocks, and then they are blown to pieces with gunpowder, making the strangest noise imaginable amongst the mountains, and shaking the ground like an earthquake. But what was the most wonderful of all, was to see the men climbing up the most lofty and dreadful precipices by their stakes which they had driven in, to reach some vein which they had found near the top in the face of the rock; and then enter a hole that, from the ground, appeared no bigger than a man's hat, and then disappear.

Occasionally they follow a vein for miles under ground, and get thousands and thousands of pounds' worth of ore; and sometimes they go on and on, and find no ore at all, and yet keep hoping and hoping to find the vein again, till they are quite ruined. Sometimes they come, all at once, to grand caverns under the mountains, all shining with fine glittering spars, and with tall columns as of snow-white marble, and roofs as of emeralds and gold and silver, as

though some fairy king had built them in the heart of the hills; but no wonder they are so beautiful, for they are the work of the King of kings, even God himself. And in this way have been found most of those grand caverns in the Peak which make it so famous, and so much visited by strangers, especially at Matlock, Buxton, and Castleton, where is one of the most remarkable caverns in the kingdom, with a river flowing through it, which you cross in a boat, like the fabulous boat of old Charon.

Sometimes, too, different sets of miners will meet as they are following the same vein from different mines; and will quarrel and fight, and make dreadful work, even unto killing one another, down in these gloomy abodes.

The miners are a curious race of people, and have laws of their own; and their quarrels about their mines are decided in a court of their own, and require lawyers who know all their customs. Perhaps if you or I were walking on a peak-hill, or by a rock, we might see a little glittering bit of lead ore, and that might prove a vein worth a million of money: and what do you think? Why, we need only claim it by the laws of the Peak, and it would be our own. Yes! anybody may seek for a vein; but if he find one, he must send for the barmaster, an officer of the mines, and he will come, and lay down by the vein some pieces of wood nailed together in the shape of a cross, called a Stose, and then, if anybody remove that within a fortnight, he is liable to be taken up and transported. But if you do not begin to work the vein in a fortnight, anybody else may bring the barmaster, and claim it for himself. So if you mean to keep it, you must do something, if it be only to dig up a turf, or knock off a piece of rock the size of your hand. Well, when you work the mine, and get ore, the barmaster will come and measure the ore with a dish, and for every

certain number of dishes, he will take one for the king, and all the rest is yours. This you must take to a smelting-house, and here they will melt the ore in a great red-hot furnace, and run the lead into great lumps called pigs.

My father having taken me several times with him, and made me acquainted with the country, would afterwards often send me with letters and money to his agent. And then might I be seen in the heat of summer, or amid the snows and storms of winter, moving like a speck on my little grey pony, across those great treeless, houseless heaths, or up those steep mountain roads. My mother, who all her life, through her affectionate anxieties, has been like a hen with ducklings, used to be filled with a thousand alarms lest, while I was away, I should be robbed and murdered; should tumble from the cliffs into the mines; be suffocated with damps, or die by some other strange death. But my father use to laugh at the very idea, saying, nobody would suspect such a boy as that of having more than fourpence about him; and as to falling into pits, why I could as readily do that at home.

But a circumstance occurred, which, at once, led us further into mining affairs, and, in the end, caused us to give them up. Often when my father was up in the Peak, a strange-looking little old man, with one shoulder considerably higher than the other, with a very white head and beard, a wild, yet grave look, and clad in a loose great coat of a red sunburnt colour, would come up to us at the mines, and make inquiries and remarks that led to an idea of his great knowledge of such matters. By degrees my father began to talk with him, and conceived a great opinion of his talent; and at length went to his house, which was on the side of a high stony hill, where there was not a tree, a hut, save his own, or a blade of grass, but only loose flat stones, that

appeared ready to slide down the hill side. His house was, in fact, raised of those stones by his own hands, and such a place I think was never seen. It was very small, and full of all sorts of retorts, and furnaces, and chemical apparatus. Here he would talk in a very wonderful manner of the ancient alchemists,—Avicenna, Averroes, Paracelsus, Bacon, and others; and he shewed my father gold and silver, and stones resembling diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, all which he declared that he obtained from those hills. He spoke with the greatest contempt of the miners, and said they ought to be put to death by government for wasting the wealth of the country; for they threw away in their ignorance ten times more than they secured, and suffered an immense quantity of silver to remain in the lead.

So much was my father captivated with this man, and moved by his advice, that he was on fire with notions of immense wealth; and getting two of his frends to join him, they purchased large furnaces, and began to smelt ore under the direction of this Byfield Bincliff. A woeful day's work was that; for this old man, as great a deceiver as ever lived, led them from one thing to another; always about to do wonders, but still doing nothing, till they found that they had each lost some thousands of pounds; while old Bincliff had grown rich. So at length all was sold; our mining schemes were at an end; Bincliff disappeared; and my father, disgusted with the tricks played upon him, declared that I should never be a miner, and sent me to London to learn another profession.

Oh! many a time as I walk along the streets, all filled with strange people, is my mind roaming about the collieries, and the hills of the Peak; and I would give all the wealth of this place, if I had it, once more to be mounted

on my old grey pony, Peter Scroggins, with my pockets full of bank-notes, and my eyes wandering over rocks and woods, and those beautiful winding waters. Well, some day that all may be, except that I shall never see poor Scroggins again; and, in the mean time, I must content myself with thinking of the happy scenes of the times of my boyhood.





CHAPTER IV.

BUT in the last chapter we have far overrun the course of our narrative. We must go back again, and look a little more particularly at things. Well, here was I with my village comrades, some of whose names I have told you without telling you my own. It is about time that I did that. The name of my family then was Middleton. It was a family that had lived in that neighbourhood for many generations, and seemed to be bound up, as it were, with everything belonging to the place and country round. My mother's family, the Redfersns, lived at the Fall—an old house of which I shall have something to say presently. The Redfersns were of as old standing there as the Middletons, and from generation to generation had lived a quiet

old-fashioned life 'on their own estate, seeming as though their only concerns were to enjoy themselves, and to sport and fish. My own name is William Middleton, but my familiar and established appellation then was Will—Will Middleton, and little Will Middleton. I think I can now hear Joe Garner, Tom Smith, Cris Newton, or Tom Poundall, calling out, "Will Middleton!" somewhere near our house, to let me know that they were expecting me to join them at some sport or expedition or other. This Cris Newton was a thin, tough, leathery lad, that was full of wit and sharp sayings, and enough to keep a whole troop of lads in spirits with his schemes and his everlasting odd fancies and clever sayings, while we were about anything; but the worst of it was, he came of a very passionate family, and would at the smallest thing often fly into the most terrible rage, and fight, and cry, and make us skip out of his way while his vexation lasted. It is true that it was soon over, and then he was wittier and more agreeable than ever; but it was a failing that often spoiled our fun just in the very height of it. Tom Poundall was a blind lad, the son of the old brickmaker, and one of the most extraordinary lads I ever knew; though blind, he seemed to do without eyes better than most other lads with them. He was not very often with us, for he was in continual request by the tradesmen of the place as their errand boy. What! you say, a blind lad? Yes, a blind lad. He knew every road, and field, and house for miles round. The butcher sent him out on his old horse with a pair of panniers, to take orders and deliver his meat to every house in the parish. The chandler did the same with his candles; the shopkeeper with his groceries. Tom went singing along to a sort of tune that seemed to be timed to the jogging pace of the horse, and turned up dirty lanes and narrow passages between village

gardens, through fields, and away to farm-houses, wherever it might be, just as if he had the best eyes in the world. Nobody could cheat him. Sometimes people attempted to try if they could not abstract a pound of candles, or a pound of sugar out of his panniers, but he seemed to have feelers all round him going down into the very bottom of his panniers. He knew in a moment if anybody only touched the panniers, and turning there, said, "Now, my lad, what are you doing?" and if he did not receive a satisfactory answer, he struck a heavy stroke on the place with his stick, which was sure to hit the person severely that did not get out of the way. He knew any one that he met by his tread before he spoke; and so surprising was his faculty of perception, that many maintained that he could see, and only pretended blindness. This notion was the more strengthened by a very odd custom of his. He used to cut candle-wicking for the chandler, and as he got up very early in winter mornings to his work, and worked at it late at night, he always would have a candle to work by during the hours of darkness. The fact was, he had lost his sight by the small-pox, and could perceive the difference between light and darkness, but could not distinguish one object from another. Tom, moreover, like all blind people, always talked of seeing things. He would say he saw such a man at such a time, meaning merely that he met him. If a wedding or a funeral procession was going along the village, or any other sight which drew the people to their doors, Tom always went out as if to see it too. He even went to *see* the illuminations on an occasion of victory, or some such thing, in the two nearest market towns, and always maintained that he admired one more than the other. It was no wonder, therefore, that many were incredulous about his blindness, and many were the tricks

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played upon him to discover the fact, but which always sufficiently proved his blindness. On one occasion my father saw him come singing down the lane below the village on the butcher's horse. To try him, therefore, he opened the gate of a field, which occupied the greater part of the width of the lane as it stood open, and the remaining space my father himself filled, by extending his arms, with his stick in one hand. Tom came singing on up to the very gate, when the horse of course, turned directly into the field. The moment he turned aside, Tom looked surprised, held his head on one side, and finding the horse, by the sound, had got upon the grass, he burst out a laughing, saying, "O! O! Robin, what there is a gate open is there, and thou hast a mind for a little grass, eh?" And with that he turned the horse back into the road, and my father having quietly put back the gate far enough for him to pass, as soon as he found the horse on the hard road again, he struck up his tune, and went singing on without being aware of anybody's presence at the gate. At another time an old lady, living in a house close to the church-yard, in order to try Tom, opened a casement looking into it, as Tom was crossing it along the footpath, and calling to him, by various questions drew him nearer and nearer, till, seeing him in the midst of heaped graves and grave-stones, she suddenly shut the window, and watched how he would regain the path. Tom, who had drawn near to the lady, cautiously, and by degrees, now, eager to regain the path, began to walk quickly back, and ran against tombs, and stumbled over graves, in a manner that speedily convinced the lady that he could not see.

Tom was too busy a lad to be our playfellow, except on some entirely holiday occasion, or when we visited his father's brick-yard, or rather my father's brick-yard, for

whom he was a long time making bricks for the building of some cottages. We delighted, as most village lads do, to watch the processes of all the handicrafts in the place. I have already mentioned my visits to the tailor, carpenter, and the brickmaker, but there was not a trade in the whole village but was a matter of many an hour's observation to us, and very interesting they are to all young folks, and there is a deal of useful knowledge to be picked up from watching them. It was a delight to us, not only to make our shoe-heel bricks, but to watch old Samuel Pouldall moulding his bricks on a sort of rude table, and handing them over rapidly to a parcel of barelegged lads, who laid them down in rows on the smooth clay floor of the brick-yard. To see the men digging, turning, grinding the clay, or the lads turning and clapping those that were drying in the yard; to see them pile them up in open walls to dry still faster, and lay straw on the top to prevent the sun, and rain, and frost from injuring them, which shewed us why the Israelites in Egypt could not do without straw, when they were compelled to make brick for Pharaoh. It was a grand sight to see them pile their unbaked bricks in the great kiln, and cover them over with earth or ashes, and make great fires in fireplaces all round. To see it blazing away like a huge furnace in the dark night, and then to see them, when it was cool, open it, and take out the bricks red and hard, and fit to build houses to last five hundred years.

And it was next a subject of great interest to see these same bricks turned into houses. Many and many were the hours that we spent in watching Abraham Street and his man in their building work. First we found them where some old house stood, busy at work some morning on the very top of it, and beginning to strip off the roof,

and pull it down. Off came old thatch, down came dusty old beams and spars; down came the walls; and in a few days the place was cleared, and they were digging out the foundations for a new erection, while a man sate with a curiously-shaped instrument, having an edge at each end, dressing the old bricks, as they called it, that is, hewing off the old mortar, and preparing them again for use. It mas a matter of daily speculation and notice what sort of a place they would raise. Every thing was a very interesting concern to us: the putting down the great timber centres, as they called them, or frame-work on which to build an arch; then the turning of the arch itself for the cellar; then the gradual growing of the walls, with spaces left for doors and windows; then the putting in the window-frames and door-frames, and laying across the joists and beams for floors; then the putting up of the roof; and then the tilers coming and covering it. Every degree of progress was a fresh source of curiosity and pleasure to us. The glazing, and the laying the floors, and the putting in fireplaces and cupboards, and setting up the stairs, and drawing the walls; and the putting in the first fires; and above all, to see the tenants come in, with all their furniture: and there was a real house, with its living people, the work of Sam Poundall, the brickmaker; Abraham Street, the bricklayer; Brough, the carpenter; Jackson, the tiler, and Allen, the glazier. Palaces may be built, and thousands may stand from day to day and watch and wonder, but I do not believe that any one of those spectators feel more wonder or pleasure than a village lad does over the building of a cottage.

But every rural trade had its attractions for us. We made our visits to the old shoemaker as often as to the

builder; and I don't know whether I could not put a shoe together if I were to try—though I never did—for every part of the mystery is familiar to me. I liked to sit and watch him thumping away at his lapstone, a great pebble so called, because he lays it on his lap to hammer his leather on. I watched, with curious eyes, the making of his wax, which is pitch and oil melted together, and made into balls. The great old water-pot in which he floated his wax-balls, to keep them firm and hard, I see it as plainly as possible standing behind his door. I see the merry old man twisting his taching-ends, as they call their waxed thread, soaking his soling leather in water, cutting out shoes and boots, and explaining to me all the time that the leather was the skin of cows or calves, seals or kids, as it happened to be, which had been tanned and curried, or dressed in different ways, coloured, or dyed, by different artists, till it assumed its then appearance and smell. All this was curious information to me, as well as the making of their welts, stitching on their soles, their binding, and polishing.

Then there were the miller and baker; their arts were very favourite studies. I liked to hear the clack of the mill, as I ran up the hill where it stood, of a holiday afternoon, and mounted the steps that seemed to sink and tremble under my feet as I went up; and there was the "rusty dusty miller," as we called him, always looking as happy, and yet as quiet as possible. It used to seem to me that there was something in the very air of a mill that made people comfortable. One never seemed to see people noising and quarreling in a mill, as in other places. The very rocking, and knocking, and humming sound of the mill, seemed to subdue and soothe all boisterous humours and bad passions. Round went the wheels; down

kept floating the flour into the bags suspended below; the miller, with his "mealy face," was quiet and good-humoured; a pleasant smell came from the grinding corn and the drying corn in the kiln below; and from the mill door, O! there was such a prospect!

The bakehouse was the place for a winter's day. There the great oven was fed with sticks and furze, and there was a blaze and a crackling as good as a bonfire. The great long forks thrust in fagot after fagot, the great long rakes raked about the embers in that fiery furnace; and all the while Adam Woodward, with his cotton nightcap on his head, and his shirt sleeves turned up to his shoulders, was busy pouring his yeast into the great kneading-trough and kneading his dough, and rolling it out, and cutting it up, and weighing it, and moulding it into loaves, and then into the oven it travelled on the great long oven-shovel. While all the village dames came flocking in with their huge brown loaves to be baked too.

Was there ever a village lad that has not found too great power of attraction at the wheelwright's shop? Our wheelwright's shop was just in my way to the school, and was a sore temptation to me many a time and oft, as I went, to linger an hour, when I was in fact an hour too late, and in danger of being greeted with that wise rhyme

A miller, a mollar,
A ten o'clock scholar.

But really! does not every one know the charms of watching the creation of a cart-wheel? First you see Woodhead the wheelwright, choosing out with a very knowing look, and with the most serious council of his men, a block of wood from that heap of blocks that you have seen long enough piled up by the wall in his shed. That is to be the nave or centre of a cart-wheel. There! the selection is

made. The man is busy upon it: shaving it with his spoke-shave; boring it for the axle; cutting holes all round, or as he called it, making *mortises* for the spokes. Next he is as busy shaving and sloping the spokes, squaring the ends to fit the mortises; and then the very next time you pass, the spokes are sticking into the nave like the rays of a great star. See! the man is now busy cutting a number of bent pieces of wood; these he calls the fellies, and when they are put together, and stuck upon the spokes, you see that they make the circle of the wheel; and it wants nothing but the tire, or iron rim, that runs all round the wheel. Well, it is ten to one but you meet the blacksmith trundling this rim like a great hoop up the street as you come home. I have done so many a time, and then I was all on the alert to be present at its putting on; for that seemed to me a very busy and important thing. Fire and water, and many a hearty stroke, must be brought into immediate action for the completion of that great work. A huge fire of wood is blazing in the yard; a secret pit is opened in the shop-floor, by the removal of some boards that concealed it. It is a long and narrow pit, now filled with water, and a stump set up on each side of it. When the tire is exactly fitted to the wheel, it is thrown into the fire, shavings and chips piled on to make it as hot as possible. Presently the tire is red-hot. Then with great tongs it is dragged forth, and applied to the wheel, which is laid flat on the ground to receive it. The men with their hammers stand ready to beat it down to its place; and amidst smoke and flame, and clanging blows, the work is done. Up the wheel is snatched and hurried to the pit in the floor; an axle is thrust through it, and laid upon the stumps; and the wheel is spun round, fizzing, hissing, smoking and steaming in the water; and sending out a pungent smell, that, with the

reek and steam, fills and darkens the place. That busy and exciting achievement accomplished, it was only natural to wish to see the body of the cart set upon its wheels; or that of the wagon on *its* wheels; and all the painting in blue and scarlet with which farmers love to have their vehicles adorned, done in its bravery.

Such were some of the principal trades of the hamlet that used to seize upon my attention and absorb many a pleasant hour. There were others, indeed, as stocking-weaving, and hoop-shaving; but these were the main attractions. I must not, however, close this chapter without mention of a certain old Jack-of-all-trades, who was always to be had for the asking, and was a never-failing resource when I wanted something to do, and somebody to help or amuse me. Many a lad will recollect such a most useful and agreeable old fellow as William Woolley; and happy is the village that has such an accomplished and accommodating person in it. Where the old man came from I can't tell; for he was not a native of the place, though he had been in it more years than I had lived. He was a little man, with remarkably white hair and pink complexion; dressed in a blue coat and waitcoat; a hat of a broadish brim, that regularly took a turn up behind. He invariably wore white lamb's-wool stockings and buckled shoes, and walked with a cane. It was evident that the old man was not a worker—Sundays and week-days he always dressed the same. He lived in a small cottage in a retired garden; and his wife was employed in nursing; so that he generally had the place all to himself, and was as glad of a companion as I was. He was a florist; his garden displayed showy beds of the most splendid auriculas, tulips and polyanthus: and it was a great delight to me to help him in weeding his beds of a pleasant sunny morning; arranging his glasses;

and to listen to all his praises of his favourite flowers. I very believed that no such flowers were to be found elsewhere in the kingdom. But the place which I should have desired to penetrate into more than all was his bed-room. This seemed to be a perfect treasury of all sorts of good and curious things. Nuts and apples, walnuts, stuffed birds, walking-sticks, fishing-rods, flower-seeds of curious sorts, and various other desirable things from time to time, came forth from thence in a manner which only made one desire to see how many others were left behind. But into that sanctum honest William never took anybody. If my father wanted a walking-stick, he had only to give the slightest hint to William, and presently after he would be seen coming in with a nice stick with its hook neatly turned, and the whole varnished as bright as the flower of the meadow-crowfoot. What, indeed, was his delight but to saunter through the wood with his eyes on the watch for good sticks; or for curious birds; or to go along the meadows by the stream, angling and talking to some village listener like myself, about a hundred country things, in a quiet way. People called him an idle man; because he never was at work on anything that brought him in a penny. But he had no family to provide for; and his wife got enough; and they might have something besides for aught I know; and why should he work for what he did not want? In my eyes he seemed, and seems still, one of the wisest sort of men. He passed his time in innocent and agreeable occupations. His flowers, and his bees, and his birds, for he had two or three that used to hang by the side of his cottage residence of fine days, and sing with all their might; they were his constant delight. He knew where a fish was to be caught, or rare bird to be seen; and if you wanted a fishing-rod, or a stick, he was a happier

man to give you one than you were to receive it. There were a hundred little things that he was, ever and anon, manufacturing, and giving to just the people that they would most please. A screw nut-crack! was not that the very thing to delight a lad like me? A bone apple-scoop, why it was a treasure to some old person! A mouse-trap, or a mole-trap, or a fly-cage—he was the man that came quietly walking in with it just as you had been lamenting the want of it. Nay, he was the man to set them, and come regularly to look after them, till they had done what they were wished to do; and if you wanted a person to carry a message, or go on some important little matter to the next village, you thought directly of William Woolley, and he was sure to be in the way, and ready to take his stick and be off about it as seriously and earnestly as if he were to have ample reward for it. And an ample reward he had—the belief that he was of service to his neighbour. Honest old William! he was one of a simple and true-hearted generation, and of that generation one of the simplest and the truest. Peace to his memory, he was an Israelite indeed!





CHAPTER V.

PLEASURES SPRINGING FROM THE PROGRESS OF THE SEASONS.

I remember, I remember
The house where I was born.
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn.

HOOD.

O ! I remember that house ; a nice old-fashioned house, as I have already described it ; and that very little window too. It was a window that looked out just on the south-east, over the garden, and the orchard, and down the

valley, right away between the green fields. O ! how deliciously the sun came streaming in there of a spring morning. All the little chamber was full of the warm light; all about I saw the flickering of boughs and leaves; the fluttering, flitting wings of birds; and all about were the cheerful chirpings and songs of birds too. I wish I could describe the happy and delicious feelings of that time. How light I felt in heart and limb; how all the world seemed made to rejoice in. As I lay and thought for a few moments, what were the images that came pouring into my bosom like the sunshine itself? Thoughts of a beautiful world all about me; of a hundred green and delicious places; of bright skies; running sparkling waters; of the affectionate parents and kind family that made my home a bower of love and delight to me; of my elder brothers at school though distant; of my little brother Claude, who, though a mere child, began to stroll about the garden and the nearer crofts with me, and looked up to me as a very champion of strength, and fountain of entertaining knowledge; of my brave comrades of the village; and of the many simple, worthy, old-fashioned people scattered about in their cottages, that were ready to answer all my inquiries, and shew me all that they knew.

When I sprung up to dress, how light and nimble were my limbs. O ! at that age one does not feel the heaviness of the earth of which we are made. Our bodies seem only spirit and life: they are ready to leap; to fly; to see all, do all, enjoy all that the glad world has to present before them; and weariness and sleep only come together, and come then with a sweetness to which our very pleasures in after years have no pretence. When up I jumped, and threw open that little casement, what an elysium lay before me ! The sun shining, the birds singing; the soft

air coming breathing in—so balmy, so full of freshness and flowery odours! and all around, the dews glittering on the grass and leaves; the thin mists floating up from the distant meadows; the brook in the valley running on glistening in the sun; the upland slopes seeming to smoke in the morning light; and the lowing of cattle, and the cheerful voices of passing people, giving a life to the whole that made me eager to be down, and out of doors. Every day I rose earlier and earlier in the cheerful, pure, dewy, sunshining mornings, and every day discovered some new wonder. There were green herbs shooting up under every hedge; then there came out early flowers; violets, blue and white violets, all along the banks as sweet and as beautiful as if they had been planted in the night by angels from heaven. Then came primroses,—O, those dear, old-fashioned, pallid, and faintly-smelling flowers! They have been loved by every generation for a thousand years, and shall be for a thousand more to come;—there they were, peeping out—one, two, three—on some mossy old bank, in some deep briery lane;—there again, they stood in a glowing cluster! Then we saw them brightening in thousands the steep side of an old wood; and as the meadows grew green, out came the golden cowslips scattered all over them; and the beautiful anemones, and the blue-bells, and a hundred other flowers that are pursued with triumphant hearts, and gathered and carried home, till, at length, the fields were covered by the advancing year with such a multitude of blooms that their novelty was lost in their splendour, and we left them alone.

Ah! those were the times. After years may be successful and even glorious: we may conquer difficulties, and dispense good, and achieve genuine honours; we may grasp power, and dwell in the very lap of riches; but there

never will come flowers like those then gathered ; pleasures so pure and exquisite as those then enjoyed ; never such sunshine, never such dews, never such beauty in air and earth, in thicket and wood and water—never anything so like to heaven—till heaven itself is reached !

My first impulse on getting down stairs, was to rush out into the garden ; and from the garden I was led on to the orchard, and from the orchard I could not help just going into the croft. There was some flower, some tempting bud, some thicket so beautiful in its now dewy leaves, that I was drawn on and on, till I often found myself at least a mile off in the fields before breakfast.

SHEPHERDING IN THE LAMBING SEASON.

IN the very early season of spring, very few things interested me more than going with the shepherd to the lambs. At this time, while these innocent little creatures are almost hourly coming into the world, they require attention day and night. The weather is often stormy and cold, and many of them the moment they are lambed would perish, if they were not instantly cared for. Many indeed do perish for want of this perpetual attention ; but thousands are saved by it. Hundreds I have seen that lay stiff and cold, that have been revived as it were by miracle. For this purpose, it is necessary to have the old sheep in warm and sheltered crofts. Many have large sheds, into which they can go ; and a room with a fire in it, where the shepherd can sit, and where any weak or perishing lambs can be brought in and cherished, by laying them on the hearth, and giving them warm milk, and occasionally a little gin. Sometimes the dams wont take to their own young ones ; and then they have to be caught several times

a-day, and held while the lambs suck—in other cases the dams are dead, and they have to wrap the little orphans in the skins of other lambs that are dead, and so induce *their* dams to adopt them. Endless are the cares and duties of this kind, but they are very interesting, and I used to delight to see how the very lambs we had so saved, grew into great sturdy fellows, full of life and fun; and if there were hundreds in a flock, their faces became each as familiar to you as those of so many people.

In spring too, and especially as the leaves began to cover the hedges, there came the most fascinating temptation to a boy in the shape of birds'-nests.

BIRDS'-NESTING.

A great hue-and-cry has been raised against birds'-nesting. It has been denounced as cruel and savage; and boys have been warned against it in well-meaning books as a deadly sin, and a thing not to be thought of: but the fact is, that while there are boys and birds'-nest, there always will be birds'-nesting. There always was since the foundation of the world, and I verily believe there always will be till its end. It is an instinct, a second nature, a part and parcel of the very constitution of a lad. There is nothing in all country life that is so fascinating, that so absorbs and swallows up in its charms the whole boy, as birds'-nesting. You may persuade the lad not to eat apples before they are ripe; not to pull off the nuts while they have nothing in them but a mere pith; not to catch butterflies, or run after cockchafers; but you will never persuade the real active, healthy, inquisitive, spirited lad not to go a birds'-nesting. What is spring, and what is the country without birds'-nesting?

What! a whole host of humane voices will exclaim—do *you* advocate the cruelty of birds'-nesting! Softly—I have said nothing of the cruelty of birds'-nesting: it is the cruelty that I abominate, and would wish to see done away with. Are cruelty and birds'-nesting inseparable things? By no means. The cruelty is all that we want to be rid of, but to be rid of that, it is not necessary to abandon birds'-nesting itself; one of the most interesting, delightful, healthful, and I will add, improving recreations that a country lad can engage in. I know, indeed, that endless are the cruelties that are practised in birds'-nesting, and no one abhors them more than I do; but while I would be amongst the most zealous remonstrants against these cruelties, I would at the same time say to every lad, by all means while you are lads, and are in the country, hunt birds'-nests every spring. I do not say, as Cousin John used to say to me—"Never mind, Will, lad, pull out that nest—the old ones have nothing else to do but build another." Nor do I mean to say that I was very scrupulous in my boyish days of seizing on any eggs or nests that attracted my fancy: but I do not recollect, many as were the miles that I went over, many the hours that I employed in birds'-nesting, that I ever carried away the young ones to nurse them, as thousands do, to death. That is the grand cruelty that I detest, and that I would denounce incessantly to every lad; and my opinion is, that if boys in general were made well aware of the real cruelty of their conduct in this respect, they would soon cease to commit it. Lads are not naturally cruel, but they are thoughtless, and grasp at whatever pleases their fancies, without the smallest idea of the pain they inflict. This is the grand lesson that parents should everywhere teach—**THAT ALL LIVING CREATURES ARE SENSITIVE LIKE THEMSELVES**, and that while they admire the

beauty of bird or moth, or any other living thing, they must have a care of inflicting pain upon it.

It is then entirely on this principle that I would have birds'-nesting conducted. Birds'-nests and eggs are too beautiful and curious not to be sought after and admired; but they are to be appropriated only in such a manner as is most consistent with humanity—**AND ON NO ACCOUNT ARE YOUNG BIRDS TO BE TAKEN BY BOYS.** And why are they not to be taken? Simply because they are little living and feeling creatures; that you cannot possibly take them from under the care of their parents without inflicting the severest tortures on them; and in ninety-nine out of every hundred cases—death. It is impossible that any boy, it is scarcely possible that any man, however knowing and experienced he may be in the habits and food of birds, can feed and cherish young birds as their own parents can; nor indeed, without inflicting upon them a great amount of physical suffering. The food of birds is so various, so peculiar, so little known in reality to the most profound naturalists, that even they, could they procure it, would not know how to proportion, to administer, or to vary it as the peculiar state or growth of the young bird may require. You may see, indeed, what food many old birds eat; you may see them devouring worms, grubs, slugs, flies, caterpillars, etc.; but it does not follow that those very birds subsist regularly and alone on those things; far less does it follow, that they give the same things to their young at all, or at all times. But even supposing that you knew exactly what was fitted for the age and digestion of your young prisoners, then comes the question, can you get it? It is possible, for it is often done by experienced bird rearers, to give them *such* food as will preserve *some* of them; but even then, how many die for one that lives, and what sufferings do even

those pass through that do escape with their lives? But, if *experienced men* can only in some degree succeed in rearing young birds, what chance have boys? Alas! we know what is the history of a brood of young, unfledged birds in the hands of a boy! They are stuffed with food that is no fitter for them than nails and snuff-boxes for ostriches; they are starved for want of the cherishing wings and downy breast of the parent bird, or smothered in wool, till they heave, and gasp, and chirp in the most melancholy notes of misery—till they are dead! The taking of young birds by lads, is as foolish as it is cruel. They never live—and every lad should believe, what all those who have seen only too much of this can tell him, that however eager he may be to carry off a brood of young birds, it is a thousand to one, that before the next day he has grown tired of them; it is still more certain, that if he be not tired, that they are sure to perish.

This then is sufficient reason why no boy should take young birds—it is foolish, and it is cruel. It is cruel to the young, and it is cruel to the old; for the instinct of parental affection is tenfold more strongly developed towards the young, than towards the egg. Let every generous minded lad recollect, when he feels tempted to carry off young birds, his ignorance of what they need, and the immense difference between the care he can bestow upon them, and the cares bestowed upon them by the old birds. It requires the perpetual and most assiduous labour of two birds to feed and cherish a brood of young ones till they are capable of maintaining themselves. To and fro they fly from morning till night, to hill and valley, through the air, and to the water, to leaf and flower, to peculiar spots for peculiar food known only to their own instinct; and under these cares the young ones thrive most marvellously, and cover them-

selves with feathers, and take to the wing with astonishing rapidity. But if any boy would learn the difference of the attentions required by young birds from the old ones, and any attentions which he could bestow upon them, he has only to notice a nest of martins under his own father's eaves. He will see that a minute does not pass through the day without one or other bird bringing food to it; and this is kept up from two or three o'clock in a summer's morning till after sunset—at least sixteen hours per day. That will give about one thousand feedings in a day, each time consisting of a fly of a peculiar species, or of water. Let him reflect, that every different kind of bird requires a different kind of food, and if he be a lad of any feeling or reflection, he will feel or see sufficient to make him despair of becoming a fitting nurse to a brood of young birds.

The great Author of Nature did not disdain to legislate in the Jewish law on this very subject of birds'-nesting. Here are his sacred provisions on this subject, in the 22d chapter of Deuteronomy. "If a bird's-nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young. But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee, that it might be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."—verses 6, 7.

On the first view of this clause in the divine law, it appears that we are permitted to take young birds. But the fact is, that the Jews were so permitted, but *we* are not. Many things were permitted to the Jews that are not permitted to us. We exist under a higher and more humane dispensation. We are Christians, whose guiding law is love; and the heavenly injunction to do to others as we

would be done to, extends to every living creature. We are bound not to inflict unnecessary misery on them, and we have only to call to mind what has just been said, to see what is the misery produced by the taking of young birds by boys.

It follows then that boys may take eggs only, and that under regulations based on the same grand rule. I say that every country boy should be encouraged to acquaint himself with the beauty and ingenuity of birds'-nests; with the beauty and variety of their eggs; with all the curious and interesting situations in which they are found. But I do not say, and it does by no means follow, that they should be encouraged to seize wantonly, and destroy all nests, and gather all the eggs that they come near. Nothing is more abominable and disgusting, than that reckless and indiscriminate ravage made amongst these interesting and beautiful things, especially in the neighbourhood of towns. This is the effect of ignorance; and I am persuaded that the more the beauty and interest of birds'-nests and eggs are made perceptible to every well-disposed lad, the greater will become his desire for their escape and preservation. What I would say to boys then would be—nests and eggs you naturally desire to have; but take no more nests than what you want to put your eggs in; and for this purpose take, if possible, only such as are built in very public situations, as by road-sides and other places, where it is impossible they can long escape. The sooner these nests are taken, in fact, the better it is for the bird; for instead of being left to sit on her eggs for a fortnight, perhaps, or even till she has hatched them, and then to have them taken, it is much better for her to have her nest taken at once, and a chance given her of building in a more retired spot. Take then only such nests as are certain to be taken,

and then in gathering eggs mind this rule : never take the whole number of eggs out of any nest that is in a secluded situation, where there is a probability of the nest escaping. If there be only one egg in, leave it till there are more. If there are three or four—five is the average number of eggs in general—take only one or two. By this means you will soon collect from different nests any number that you may desire, and yet inflict no grievance on the parent bird ; for birds are no arithmeticians, they can't count their eggs ; and while they have one or two left, they seem as perfectly contented as if they had a dozen. But never take all that the nest contains, if it be only one, for then the bird will very probably forsake the nest altogether. By this system of merely levying a tribute, as it were, to your admiration of these beautiful little natural productions, you may gratify the most ardent desire of the possession of birds' eggs of every kind without the slightest commission of cruelty. It is true that you prevent the full increase that there would otherwise be of birds ; but this is in my opinion no cruelty whatever, but on the other hand rather a humanity. Providence has evidently provided for every casualty that can attend birds, for in spite of the wholesale ravages that are now committed on their nests there is no apparent decrease of their numbers. If a certain quantity of eggs is not destroyed, the flocks of small birds become so immense—that the farmers are obliged to shoot them by hundreds to keep down their numbers. By a moderate and considerate appropriation of part of the eggs, you therefore effect the object which is actually necessary to the farmer, without the pain and death which he is afterwards obliged to inflict. Having, too, adopted this plan while you are but little boys, as you get bigger, and are become acquainted with all kinds of nests and eggs, you

will begin to care little about gathering them, though you may, and most probably will, still take the greatest delight in looking after them occasionally. You will contract a love for all country objects, because by the very circumstance of rambling about after birds'-nests, you will have acquired a great and familiar knowledge of the country, its delicious haunts, and its endless variety of animate or inanimate things. There is no part of natural history, whether it be botany, entomology, or the pursuit of birds or other creatures, but it has this one great advantage—it leads you into every part of the country at its most agreeable seasons; and opens your eyes and your hearts to what is going on in its more secret recesses. You are led away into green valleys, through woods and heaths, up into the mountains; and everywhere the charms of nature sink deep and imperceptibly into your soul, till, in after years you are surprised to find how much you know, and how much you love, in the great and splendid theatre of nature.

There is not a lad amongst you that delights to look after a bird's-nest more than I do still. There is not one that feels a greater pleasure in contemplating that curious little piece of ingenuity a nest, with all its spotted and speckled eggs lying in it, in the midst of a green bush or on a green bank, than I do. And I am not alone in this taste. It is one which Rogers the poet tells us that that great statesman Charles James Fox had: and my uncle, a great sportsman, has always been as fond all his life of going a birds'-nesting as of going a shooting. When I was a lad, every Saturday afternoon in spring, Harry Gillet, one of my schoolfellows, and I used to run down to the Fall, and Richard Redfern used to take his gun and march off with us a birds'-nesting. His gun was a mere excuse,—he *seemed* to be in pursuit

of hawks, magpies, or other birds that destroy game or their eggs, while he really was birds'-nesting. So away we went down by the winding brook, peeping into its bushes, and under its projecting banks,—in the one we found that beautiful curiosity, the nest of the featherpoke, round as a ball, spangled all over with silver lichens, and full of feathers and eggs; under the other, we found throstles and blackbirds' nests. We went up long bushy lanes into the woods, and round some large ponds, Loscoe Dams, and the Egriff Dams, in the midst of the woods. All these places were beautiful places, and abounding with hawks, wood-pigeons, woodpeckers, crows, jackdaws, bullfinches, and many other curious birds. Sometimes we were going along the sides of banks overgrown with bushes and green plants, each with a large stick, beating the bushes as we went, and ever and anon out flew some bird, and in we plunged, and there was a blackbird or a throstle, or a yellow-hammer or a willow-wren's nest. Then we were pondering along the dim and deep woods, looking up into the tall trees, sometimes spying out a wood-pigeon's nest, which is a mere layer of sticks, so thin that you may see the two white eggs through it from the ground. Off would go the great bird with a dashing, rushing sound, and up one of us would go, and putting the two eggs into his mouth to prevent them from being broken in descending, down he came again. Anon we should come to some crow or hawk's nest, perched on the tallest bough of one of the very tallest trees; and on knocking hard on the stem of the tree, if the old bird was on the nest off she would go, and up one of us went, be the tree high as it would. Then again we were poring round the sedgy banks of the great ponds for water-hen's nests, which are built of flags and water-grasses, amongst the reeds or

rushes, in some difficult place to come at for water or mud, but if the little spaniel sent the bird off we always contrived some means of getting to it, either by wading, or laying a rail, or a pole, or something, along to it. The nest is large enough to fill a wheelbarrow often, and the eggs are large, and covered with greenish-red spots. They, and hawks' and carrion-crows' and corncrakes' eggs, made a grand shew in our nests. Many a hunt we had for these corncrakes' nests in the grassy fields; and many a hunt on the heath and in the fallow fields for those of the pewits. The dog used wonderfully to assist us in finding the pewits, for their eggs, which are large and dark-brown, are so much the colour of the ground that it is not easy to see them.

O! most delightful were these rambles. I often wonder more and more now, to find from my memory how much the beauty of the wild and retired haunts into which they led us fixed itself on my heart and imagination. And it was not only the birds and their nests that we became acquainted with, but in one place we saw the polecat running along to its hole in the deep wood, or startled the old fox from his lair in a great bush; in another we came upon the otter, watching for fish on the edge of the old pond, and saw him plunge into it when he perceived us. We saw the fishes glancing along the clear streams, or basking on the sunny surface. Rabbits and hares, squirrels and weasels, wild mice, and bees, and wasps, and many a brilliant dragon-fly, were objects of curious observance in our rounds. To me all their haunts and habits are familiar matters, and give me a continual interest in them, and all this I owe, more than to anything else, to the simple but fascinating habit of birds'-nesting.

Many a time, as I have said, I used to stroll off before breakfast; right away through the dewy fields, till the

stitches of my shoes were washed white as snow, and my shoes themselves lost every bit of black from them, and were as soft as tripes. I had this nest to visit, to see if it were finished, and that, to see if the bird had yet laid an egg, and the other to see if she had began to sit; and then that bush was so attractive, and that bank so likely for a nest; and how beautiful it was when the yellow-hammer flew off and shewed her neat round nest, built of dry grass and lined with black horse or cow hair, with its curiously scrawled eggs, lying amongst the green mercury in the bank. A robin was seen sitting with his red breast, and caring nothing for me; or the chaffinch's nest, so lovely in its spangling lichens, was discerned in the black-thorn! Ah! my basin of new milk and my hot roll *were* delicious after such a round.

Sometimes I used to go up to Kidsley Park, a farmhouse where a worthy old farmer, Thomas Peake, used to hobble out on his two sticks and shew me a score or two of nests about his buildings, orchard, and garden. There were owls in the barn, and I found a deal of amusement amongst them, especially when there were young ones; in the trees that were nailed to the house walls, there were fly-catchers; in some hole in the wall of the out-buildings there was a firetail, or redstart's nest with its blue eggs; the wryneck built in the hollow of an apple-tree; and as for the sparrows, tomtits, proud-tailors, and missel-thrushes' nests they were without end. Nay, sometimes he would lead me out and shew me the great wonder of all birds'-nesting, the cuckoo's egg or young one in a hedge-sparrow's nest.

The old man would eagerly join us too in another sort of birds'-nesting that we were very fond of; and that was seeking for nests of turkeys, guinea-fowls, ducks, and geese; birds that, although tamed, yet retain so much of

their wild nature that they love to get into some hidden thicket, or amidst beds of nettles, or in dark copses to make their nests, and many an eager hunt we had after them. A great triumph it was, when at length we found the old bird sitting quietly on her secret nest, with her quick glittering eye fixed on us; or found the nest while she was absent, with its large collection of large eggs; nor less was the triumph when we had not been able to find it, and some day the parent mother came marching forth from her retreat, with a whole chirping train of young ones at her heels.

So much for the pleasant pursuit of birds'-nesting: and I have only one more injunction to give, and that is, to respect the ancient privileges of the redbreast and the wren. It is their immemorial immunity never to have their nests taken. They claim a sort of familiarity with man; they build near him as under his protection. The robin holds a rank of high respect, as the friend and sexton of the Children in the Wood. He always hangs dead leaves out in front of his nest as his coat of arms, derived from that meritorious deed. It is a very ancient adage—

Robinets and Jenny Wrens
Are God Almighty's cocks and hens.

One thing let every boy remember respecting the wren. You may put your hand into the nests of other birds and even take away some of their eggs and they do not seem aware of it, but only put a single finger into the mouth of the wren's nest and she will desert it for ever.

GARDENING.

But one of the first pleasures which the spring brings to a boy is that of gardening. It comes as soon, and often sooner than birds'-nesting itself; and, while it is quite as

absorbing for a time, has the reputation of not being so cruel. I suppose the division and subdivision of worms which necessarily takes place, is not regarded in that light by the tender-hearted denouncers of birds'-nesting; or possibly they may have come to the same conclusion as a very clever young Irish lady of my acquaintance, who being told that on a worm being cut into two, each part became very soon a perfect worm, remarked that "it must then be rather an advantage to a worm to be cut in two than otherwise." But leaving this delicate question to the philosophers, let us devote our attention to the delights of a boy's garden. For what little boy has not a garden that he loves, and digs in, and turns over a thousand times in spring, and neglects all the rest of the year? Yes, it is a spring passion. When the fine days of February or March come out, out comes too the gardener. Old potato-tops, bean and pea straw, and a variety of dry remains of last year's crops are gathered together and piled into a heap, and set on fire, and the moment the boys see the thick column of smoke rising up, out they come too, and make a great glorification over it. They seize on Thomas's fork, and pile on more stuff, and stand round and shout and admire, and get their mouths and eyes full of smoke as the wind suddenly whifs round; and think it all very grand and delightful. Old Thomas thinks that the matter being taken out of his hands, he may as well proceed with his digging, and suddenly he is seen with spade and rake beginning to turn up the fresh soil to sow his early peas, or stick in some brocoli or cauliflowers, or something or other. And as suddenly the lads are seized with a fit of digging too. There is a great running and rummaging amongst heaps of lumber and things thrown by in the garden-house, and out come sundry little spades and rakes;

and a desperate digging and raking begins in a corner of the garden known to the lads by the interesting name of "our garden," or more commonly in its separate beds by the terms of "my garden," and "my garden." A certain little wheelbarrow is heard proceeding thither by very distinct whistling and jinglings of the axle, which wants a touch of oil after its winter's rest, or more properly, rust.

Spring cannot come without awakening this gardening passion, any more than it can avoid bringing out leaves and flowers. The freshness with which the soil turns up, the green buds peeping from earth and tree, the very feeling of the air, all prompt to an enthusiastic use of spades and rakes, trowels and setting-sticks. As Thomas gets into the flower-borders, the lads are taken with a sympathetic affection for their flower-garden, which truly since last summer has exhibited a forlorn enough appearance. It is carefully dug with a little three-tined fork, that the roots and bulbs may not be injured, and yet every root and bulb in turn is laid as bare to the eye as if it was taken out of the earth altogether, because they want to ascertain exactly what everything is, and loud and sympathetic are the exclamations of recognition as they perceive what each and everything is. It is found that some are dead, and some decayed; this rose-bush and that wall-flower, and the snapdragon, and the very bush of southern-wood, have most mysteriously disappeared. There is, in fact, a vast emptiness and desolation in the land, which is by some means to be filled up again. It is really wonderful what can have become of all those violets, primroses, and oxlips which were gathered last spring from the woods and hedges, and brought hither; and where those hen-and-chicken daisies are gone to! The loss must be repaired by some means, and the most obvious means are to go to

Thomas. So Thomas soon finds himself closely beset, and the things in his barrow which stands close beside him are undergoing a close examination, and “Thomas, I may have this, mayn’t I? and this mayn’t I? and this—and this?” come thick and fast upon him; and as he passes a lily-root or a crocus-root, there is a very earnest petition for a little of it, and a slip from this shrub, and a sucker from that, are promptly sued for. Thomas finds himself rather bothered, but the only means of obtaining peace is to yield and be liberal, and thereupon there is a great triumphing and thanking, and very soon the little gardens are restored to that miscellaneous fulness and chaotic order which belong to that species of garden, which is dug to-day, dug to-morrow, and dug the next day, and every root and plant is transplanted at least once or twice a week.

But it is a delightful occupation; the freshness and acuteness of the enjoyment of a garden are never so truly experienced as at that age. Who does not recollect the delight and luxury of that time? Everything then is perceived with a clearness and minuteness never afterwards known. Coming years bring rival cares and attachments, and the heart never more launches itself so singly and entirely on its objects. Every plant, every leaf, nay, every indenture of leaf, and every speck and spot on stem, leaf, or flower, is marked on the mind with wonderful vividness. How strongly did we then perceive the beauty of every seed that we received to set. The round and rich brown sweet-pea, the polished and speckled lupin, the dark gunpowdery grains of the larkspur, the crumpled nasturtium, the long black sunflower. What treasure were then our vegetable snail-shells, cockscombs, hares-feet, sedums, London-pride, and foxes’-tails, or red amaranths! With what vigour and enthusiasm did we then bring forth

our tools on a fine spring morning ; dig over all the fresh mould, and plant lupins, sweet peas, everlasting peas, mignonette seeds, and many others ; and what a joy it was to water them, and break down the crusty surface as the sun baked it ; and to be up in the morning and discover any young plant as it peeped out of the earth ; O ! those were days of dear delights, cheaply purchased ! There were mustard and cress to be sown in circles, or in the letters of our names : and when our lupins, and sweet peas, and larkspurs grew, how we watched every inch of their progress, and every leaf as it expanded itself, and every bud as it reared itself higher and higher in the air ! and when out came the flowers, red, and white, and purple, and flesh colour ; and the bees were humming on our own flowers on a sunny summer's-day ; actually gathering honey from our *own flowers* ! I leave it to every one to imagine, or to recollect for himself the depths of those delights, very sure that he can recall none more exquisite. There is many a proud and happy gardener in this country, where gardening is so much pursued and enjoyed ; but the proudest and happiest is the boy-gardener, or his sister.

I shall speak hereafter of Ackworth School, when I come to school-days ; but I must here say, that of all the gardens of children that I have seen, none can compare with those of the lads there. Their garden-ground is situated at the lower end of their play-ground, and consists of a square piece of land, lying between the end of the school and the great garden of the establishment. As there are 180 lads, the gardens are 180 in number, each being about three yards long, and a yard and a half wide. They lie parallel to each other, with a walk between each ; so that every boy can have the pleasure of walking past every garden, without trespass or annoyance to any one.

These gardens are kept with admirable neatness, and in summer present one gay scene of varied colours and sweet odours. Here the lads spend a great deal of their time gardening or reading. Every one has a neat trowel, with which he contrives to do all his work, digging, raking, transplanting, and what is more, he builds a little wall along each side of his garden, which prevents the soil from getting into the walks. These walls are made of earth, mixed with water into a stiff mud, and well tempered, as clay is for brick-making. The walls are made about four or five inches high, and five wide, and when dry resemble very much a rim of stone. The greatest care is taken to make them straight and smooth. Very often the upper, outer edge is rounded handsomely off, or it is left quite sharp; but these little walls are always smoothed by the trowel dipped in water, and the cracks carefully filled and smoothed over in the same manner, so that they have the neatest appearance imaginable. Besides these walls, they also build the most ingenious little houses in their gardens, of the same material; perhaps two feet high, as tool or seed houses, or as the occasional deposit of a book. These are sometimes made square at top—top, sides and all being mud; others are neatly thatched, and all have regular doors, often porches, and always little glass windows. Standing amongst their gay shew of flowers, they have the funniest little fairyland look imaginable. Other boys again have farm-houses, with cattle stalls in the farm-yard and sheds, with cribs and cattle and houses all cut very cleverly in wood. There are pools of water, and ducks and geese and swans upon them; and other boys amuse themselves by erecting a Tower of Babel, or a Solomon's Temple.

It is obvious that one of these works must cost a great

deal of time, invention, and labour; but then it is a source of endless pleasure, especially as while it is going on it is a matter of great curiosity to the whole school, and many are the plans and improvements suggested; and much is the enjoyment derived from the owner's companions joining him in all his schemes and labours. Every one who sees these gardens is struck with admiration, both of the particular ingenuity of these things, and of the general beauty of the whole. All boys who have gardens might adopt this practice of the Ackworth lads with great advantage, and would find a world of pleasure in erecting these mud castles, which I never saw raised anywhere else.





CHAPTER VI.

PLEASURES SPRINGING FROM THE SEASONS, CONTINUED.
COWSLIP-GATHERING—ANGLING—BATHING
SWIMMING.

We have said so much of birds'-nesting and gardening, that we must hasten on, for the season will, whether we do or not. There is cowslip-gathering,—that is a genuine pleasure in its day. The country is become very delightful by the time that they make their appearance. The grass is green, the hedges are becoming leafy; the sun shines gaily and even warmly far and wide; all is full of spring-tide and pleasantness—the birds are singing, and birds'-

nests are in the bushes. How beautiful then are these golden and nodding cowslips! What an old-acquaintance look they have! How delicious and familiar is their smell! How delightful do those old meadows and grassy crofts look, scattered all over and over with them! There they are too, sprinkled in the orchards, and in the glades of the woodlands, and amongst the very thickets, growing there taller and more beautiful than anywhere. What a joy it used to be to us to scamper all amongst them, and gather in basketsful—fragrant basketsful, and carry them home, and sit all round under the old cherry tree in the garden “peeping them,” as it was called; that is, pulling out the peeps, or tubed corollas, so called, perhaps, from some fanciful resemblance to eyes,—plucking them to make cowslip-wine, and a very nice country wine too, when well made.

Then come, on the very heels of these pleasures, angling, bathing, and learning to swim. Very little boys must fish in very little streams, or under the care of some older person, or they may tumble in, and get drowned. We had a fine winding stream, not much larger than a brook, but which abounded with fish, and many a pleasant holiday did we spend on its banks. I shall presently have to relate one of our fishing adventures there: here let me merely say, that all these pleasures are manly and healthful pleasures, thoroughly suited to lads, and in which all country boys ought to be accomplished. At the same time, they all require great care. The art of angling, and the art of swimming should be acquired, if possible, under the care and guardianship of some grown person. It is highly desirable that every boy should, both for his health and security through life, learn to swim early and learn to swim well. Without this knowledge, a man is always

in danger when he has to cross the water; and loses moreover the noble opportunities of assisting and saving his fellow-creatures in moments of peril. There cannot be a greater luxury than that of swimming. Let all boys therefore accustom themselves to the water betimes. Let them get some one to give them a correct idea of the principles of swimming, and of the proper action, which are few and simple, and then with coolness and self-possession nothing is so easy as to swim. Let them never cease their endeavours in fine weather till they have acquired the art; and when they cannot have the company of a more experienced person, let them confine themselves to bathing, and bathing only in those waters that are sufficiently shallow, and known to be safe. Schoolboys are apt to play tricks with those who are learning to swim that are dangerous; and though they are thought to be good jokes by thoughtless lads, are such as no honourable boy will practise. I remember when I was learning to swim, being a lad about fifteen years old, some of my schoolfellows took me out with them in a boat into the middle of the river Tame, in Staffordshire. We landed on an island covered with tall trees. It was a splendid summer day; and my comrades said, "What a grand day for a bathe! let us have a plunge here." I, of course, knowing that they were expert swimmers, inquired if it was beyond my depth. "O no!" said they, "we'll shew you in a minute." In they plunged, and began to wade away to a good distance from the bank.

Seeing them, as it appeared, only wading about up to the middle, I plunged fearlessly in, and could find no bottom! The moment my head emerged from the water I heard them all laughing heartily. "Well, can you bottom it, Middleton?" they cried. I gasped out as well as I could, "No!" "No, nor you never will," cried they,

"except you go down a dozen yards." On this alarming information, which was true enough, for they had not been wading, but practising what is called "treading the water," I struck off towards the bank with all the composure that I could muster, and to my own astonishment found that I could swim very well; and so I could ever afterwards. The lads gave themselves great credit for their plan of teaching me to swim, telling me at the same time, that that was the deepest known place in the river; but it struck me as a most hazardous and unwarrantable experiment. Had my courage failed me, or my skill been less than it really turned out to be, down I must have gone, and it is ten to one if all their efforts could have saved me.

RIDING THE BUSH-HARROW.

As the season advances, the country boy finds many a stray pleasure in the fields, besides those already described, by going out to the labourers as they are at work there. I remember the fun we used to have in riding on the bush-harrow; that is, a gate or flake, or a frame resembling one of these things, on a pair of little wheels, with thorns drawn through the bars, and so pulled about the grass fields by a horse, to level and scratch down any worm-heaps or other lumps of earthy matter before the fields are shut up for the grass to grow for mowing. The men used to make us a seat on the bushes, and with long switches, and pretending to drive, we rode about the fields hourly. I remember one day, that they had been cutting down the tall boughs of the croft hedge, and were drawing them up into the yard tied in great bundles, with old Peg the stiff pony. My little brother Claude and I had a seat made in the middle of each load, and the stems of the boughs being bound

together in front, and the twigs all swelling out behind, there we sate in the midst, as in a wild sort of chariot, and my father told us that we rode like two ancient Trojans in their chariot—and so we thought it very grand, especially as old Peg, not very well understanding this sort of thing, rushed along at a great rate, so that the man who held her head was obliged to keep on the run too, and especially when we went through the gate into the yard, and Peg heard the boughs rustle against the posts as she went through. These seem little things now, but they were very merry things then.

HAY-MAKING.

THEN came hay-making. I think a volume might be written on the delights of a hay-field. How pleasant is it as you approach, to hear the scythes ringing as the mowers sharpen them, standing in a row, with their sharp shining blades over their shoulders. How pleasant it is to see the men with their coats off, and the merry women all flinging about the grass to dry. To smell the delightful odour of grass newly cut, or hay newly dried. To see the green earth; the bright sky; to feel the fresh-blowing breeze; and to hear the anxious calls of different birds! How pleasant it is to get into shady sylvan nooks in the hay-field—a party of happy children—nooks overhung with alders and hazel bushes, with a clear stream running over its pebbly bed; and with the luscious meadow-sweet, and the large blue geranium blooming all about its banks, and the wild rose on its bushes.

Many an hour have we whiled away in such sports, catching minnows and miller's-thumbs, that lie amongst the stones in those shallow running waters; or, pulling off our shoes and stockings, have waded along, feeling under the

hollow banks for crawfishes, little freshwater lobsters, and have been suddenly startled by the rising of the wild-duck from the long sedge or reeds, and then to see the young ones lying close to the ground as dead, or running with all their might—downy, dusky things, unable to fly!

In the midst of our delight, we have perhaps heard the mowers calling to us; and off we ran to learn what wonder awaited us—what prize they had found. And what was it? Perhaps a little heap of dry grass, round as a ball, and large as both one's hands held in a globular form; and which, when carefully opened, shewed a whole tribe of young field-mice, all bare as our own skin, and all squeaking shrilly; or perhaps they had got their hairy coat on, and, with their black, shining eyes, seemed ready to run into the world to seek their fortunes. Or what else might it be? Perhaps a round ball of green moss, out of which came a deep hum, and which when opened sent out a swarm of bees,—a humblebees' nest, all streaming with honey, delicious honey! Or what else might it be? Perhaps a corncrake's nest, with its red-spotted eggs; or a partridge's-nest, the old bird killed by the scythe, lying on the ground, filling our hearts with sweet pity, and the numerous tawny eggs our eyes with admiration. These we took home, and put under a hen; and when they were hatched, we used to take the little active brood of young partridges into the fields. We had a large basket with the bottom knocked out, which we placed over an ant-nest, and putting the young partridges in it, we opened the ant-nest, and the little things devoured them and their eggs with wonderful rapidity. It was curious to see how quickly their bright eyes spied out the ants, and pecked them from their own legs, or from each other's backs as they crept over them. The charge of these little birds was a great novelty, but they were troublesome

creatures to keep possession of, their nature always prompting them to run off to the fields whenever they could ; and spite of all endeavours we soon lost them.

WASP-NESTING.

WHEN the hot days of July and August came, there was then famous fun in taking wasps'-nests. These insects, you know, scoop out a cave in a bank, and there make their nests. This nest is constructed of paper, which they form by gnawing old rotten wood, and moistening it with a glutinous liquid with which nature has provided them for the purpose. They were the first paper-makers in the world. Wasps of all kinds make their nests of this paper, from the hornet to the small wasps that live in pairs, and hang their nest to the wooden part of a shed or side of an old tree, about the size of a full-blown rose, and a good deal resembling it too in size, though not in colour, for it is grey. The common wasps, of which we are now however speaking, form of this paper, flat cakes, each full of holes or cells, looking pretty much each like a muffin, with its numerous perforations. In these cells they deposit their eggs, which soon become grubs, and these grubs soon after wasps. The nest consists of several of these cakes, placed one on the other, the higher ones gradually decreasing in size, till they form a cone, and terminate in a point.

A very curious thing is this nest of grey paper, the whole about the size of a man's hat, and it is equally curious to see the wasps when they are busy scooping out the hole to build in. You may see them continually flying out of the bank ; and every time they bring out a lump of earth between their legs as large as themselves, and let it fall a few yards from the place. Thus they carry out the soil, and leave space

for the nest; a labour which, when the quantity is compared with their own size, is truly astonishing. They are curious insects, and well worth noticing; but they are at the same time, very mischievous, and sting dreadfully, and also increase so fast, that it is well that boys are fond of destroying them.

It is quite a sight to see a party of boys preparing to storm a wasp's nest. They go in an evening when all these fiery little creatures are quiet in their holes, with their candle and lantern, their gunpowder made into a paste and fixed on the end of a stick, and with a spade to dig out the nest; and all armed with green boughs, ready if any of the wasps escape to beat them down. They light their gunpowder, and hold it to the hole. It burns hissing away in a stream of fiery sparks like a rocket, which penetrating down to the nest, fill it with sulphurous fumes, and suffocate the wasps. A sod is clapped in the hole to keep in the fumes for a time; and when they think their purpose is effected, they dig out the nest. Then you may see every boy stand on his guard, with anxious looks and elevated bough, ready to defend himself, if it prove, as it often does, that they have not destroyed, but merely irritated the wasps, and the wrathful insects rush out to take vengeance on the assailants. Hark! there is a hum!—the wasps rush out!—the cowards fly—some screaming amain, with a host of angry insects rushing after them, hissing in their ears, tangling in their hair, darting into their bosoms, and stinging them in a dozen places. One brave boy stands at his post, waves his bough gallantly, defends himself stoutly, beats down the insects in clouds, and escapes without a single sting, bearing the nest, finally, away in triumph on the spade, for which some old fishermen will give him sixpence, for the grubs will catch him plenty of fine fish.

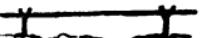
PLEASURES OF AUTUMN: CRAB AND APPLE GATHERING—
NUTTING—ACORN-GATHERING, ETC.

So passes the summer; and many other novel occurrences besides those which we have noticed, give continual interest and variety to the boy's life. There are sheep-washing, and sheep-shearing, that most lads delight to witness; and, ever and anon, a swarm of bees take wing, and have to be pursued with noise of pans and fire-irons, till they please to settle down, hanging in a huge brown cluster from some bough or other; and then there is their capturing and bringing home. These are matters that are full of curious attraction to young eyes;—and then come the pleasures of autumn. First comes corn harvest; the reaping and mowing, the gleaning and carrying—all to be witnessed; and that scarcely passed, when shooting time arrives. No little boy should meddle with a gun; but it is a great delight for boys to accompany men, and to see the dogs in the thickets and copses and stubble fields put up the plump partridges and beautiful pheasants, and to see the sportsman lay them at his feet in a moment. And then comes apple-gathering. Ay, apple-gathering and crab-gathering time was a merry time with us. There were we lads, Joe Garner and Cris Newton and I, busy with reared ladders in the pleasant old orchard. Day after day were we thus employed, for the orchard was a very large one, and many of the trees were the largest I ever saw. With a cord tied to our basket, and thrown over a bough near us, two of us quickly filled the basket, and the third let it down and emptied it, and then pulling the cord, hoisted up the empty basket again to us. And then there was the carrying away of large basket after basket full to the store-

room. And grand fun had we in the great crab-tree. This was rather a cluster of trees, that stood just without the orchard wall, and generally hung all over with red-cheeked and red-striped crabs as thick as it could hang; and as they required no careful picking, it was our job, when the apples and pears were all got, to mount this tree, and shake down the crabs in a rattling shower, till they lay in a most prodigious multitude on the ground. Then it was just as good fun to go with old Samuel Davis with this cargo of crabs in a cart to Kidsley Park, to press them in the ancient crab press, which stood in the orchard, into verjuice. This press was a large square stone, which fitted into a strong oaken trough, and was assisted by the leverage of a long pole thrust into a hole in a sturdy old pear-tree. There we had plenty of pulling and tugging and watching of the verjuice, spouting out of the trough into our barrel, which when full we carried home with us in the cart.

Many a pleasant day too we spent at that season in nutting in the great wild woods; and many a journey we took there with the wagon, fetching timber for the winter fires. The woods indeed are delightful haunts at all seasons. To say nothing of the birds, and squirrels, and other wild creatures that haunt them, there is generally something going on in a wood that is interesting. There are the men busy felling trees, or making charcoal, or loading and carrying away timber. Nothing can be more pleasant than to watch the woodmen at their work. To see them hewing, stroke after stroke, till down comes the tall tree with a crash and thunder, and the smash of lashing and crushing boughs that resound through the wood. It is curious too, to see in what a little time they will bring down a tree of eighty feet high, and half a yard in diameter. With a saw, after having just hewn round the

stem of the tree, so as to clear it from the bark, I have often seen four men at work—three pulling the saw and one pulling it back again—cut down fir trees of this size in five minutes each on an average. To see them lop the boughs, bind the branches up into fagots, or bavins, as they are in some places called, and pile the thicker boughs up in square stacks for firewood; to see them load the heavy trees on their drays, with ropes, and pulleys, and levers, and lead them away; or to see them, as they often do, dig their saw-pit in the woods, raise a shelter from the wind over it, and make themselves a hut of boughs to take their dinners in; and then, with their fire burning cheerfully in cold weather, set to work and saw up the trees into boards and other pieces of timber,—all this is very interesting to witness. There is something very beautiful and primitive in all these operations in the wild woods. The woodmen have a rustic, picturesque, and quiet country air about them that is pleasing. They often are very good-natured, quiet old fellows, that have a deal of knowledge of country matters; and have a sort of simple sylvan unction in their way of telling you things, that is very agreeable. I have always liked to talk to them, and have learned many things from them of the habits of birds and animals that I otherwise should not have known. You find them sometimes employed in peeling the bark off the oaks before they fell them, which is done in summer, or rather spring, just as the leaves are coming out, and when the woods are very pleasant. It is quite worth while to watch them. To see how easily and clearly they strip off the bark in large sheets, with a particular instrument, and leave the giant tree naked to the very extremities of its branches, and then drive down short stakes of the figure of a Y, at some distance, and laying a pole over them in

this manner,  rear the bark up to dry

against them, thus:  And when these ranges of bark have stood in the woods for some months perhaps, some day you find the tanners busy there, piling it in great loads on their wagons, and carrying it off to tan leather with.

At other times you will find the woodmen cutting down the alder trees in the swamps, for the chair-makers and clog-makers. All up in Lancashire and a great part of Yorkshire, the common people wear huge thick wooden clogs, which are almost always made of the alder wood. Patten-makers and ladies' clog-makers are great consumers of alder wood. In the manufacturing districts, a vast quantity is used, in spoles, bobbins, and various other things in the spinning mills. So the woodmen cut it and square it, bind the slender poles up in bundles, and cut out the clog-wood into little logs of the requisite size. Rich and red the chips and the hewn parts of this wood look; and the whole process makes an agreeable variety in wood scenery.

The charcoal-burning is an object of interest too. Huge piles of wood, cut into certain lengths and cloven, if too thick, to a suitable bulk, are made in the woods. These are covered with turf and earth, and are kept burning day and night, watched by the men so as to prevent much flame bursting out, for that would spoil the charcoal, burning the wood to ashes, instead of that black, light, charred mass which is wanted. Night and day they watch it, and when the whole mass is charred, carefully stopping up every crevice, or vent of flame, they thus put it out, then throw it open, and spread it to cool.

These operations in the woods give continual changes

of scenery. At one time where stood grand old trees—you find them cut down, and lying in all their heavy bulk, their arms lopped, and perhaps their bark stripped. Perhaps the next time you approach that place, inwardly lamenting that your favourite trees are gone, you find the ground where they stood all thickly sprinkled with primroses or cowslips, or azure with one wide profusion of bluebells; and in the fagot-stacks around, blackbird and throstle nests, that it is a pleasure to peep into. It is difficult totally to defeat the continual efforts of nature to adorn her wild scenes with beauty.

But the grandest sport of all was going of acorn-gathering out in the oak-woods when they were arrayed in their russet hues; and the great winds come sweeping around, and the dark-brown glossy acorns came rattling down, and lay thickly on the leaf-strewn earth. Ay, that was delightful! Everything was wild and excitingly gloomy. The squirrels might be seen springing from bough to bough; the rooks and jackdaws come in crowds to claim their share; and all the old sows in the neighbourhood, at the very first sound of the autumnal blast, had rushed away instinctively to the oak wood. The roaring of the wind was to them as the sound of a trumpet, telling them that acorns were falling in thousands; and if confined in their styes they would scream with rage, and when let out trot off with a savage eagerness that defied all opposition of lads or dogs, sticks or stones. People often say pigs can see the wind—pigs scream in a high wind—they scream for impatience to be under the oaks and the bushes where the mast is falling in a delicious plenty. Pleasant is it to hear the roaring winds of autumn, and see the withered leaves running along the ground in crowds, like a huge flock of birds racing in a madness of mirth. But autumn

passes, and winter stares up in the face—and there is one great day for which every country boy is already making long preparation—and this is—

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

FIFTH of November is not half kept up in the way it used to be, and a good thing it is that it is not; for every town and village in the kingdom used to be in a state of utter riot and confusion on fifth of November morning. Great fires were burning in every open place; guns, blunderbusses, pistols, key-guns, firing in all directions; squibs and crackers bouncing and fizzing everywhere under feet; rockets soaring over head. Mobs of lads carrying round the image of Guy Faux; and men and lads in every place, shouting, scuffling, making all the uproar, and doing all the mischief possible. The accidents on that night, from horses taking fright, and old people falling in their haste to escape from some gunpowder persecution or other; barns and houses set on fire by the flying of sparks and flying of firebrands, were innumerable. It was dangerous for anybody to be out of doors after it grew dark, and was not very safe even within doors; for fire and drunken madness were everywhere around. These things have cured themselves. In towns, in general, bonfires and firing of guns are prohibited; but on many a village green bonfires still flame and guns still resound. I know how much we used to enjoy our fire, and how busy we were for a month before preparing for it. Wood was to be collected; and where was it to be got? It seemed to be an old custom, that any loose or rotten wood that could be laid hands on, was all lawful prey for the occasion. Nobody had a doubt on the subject,—nobody had the smallest idea of any impropriety in seizing on waif and stray timber for this great and old occasion. Guy Faux *must* be burnt.

Fifth of November *must* be kept up—*it always was so you know*. That settled everything; and accordingly all loose or damaged posts and rails were made capture of. Farmers found all loose stakes in their hedges carefully gleaned out. They were reminded duly of any old trunks of trees, and the roots that lay about on their land to its evident detriment—that is, they were reminded of the fact, by those incumbrances being kindly removed. It was wonderful how the whole country was cleared, by this great purgation of the Fifth of November, of old rotten logs and stumbling-blocks, and decaying heaps of fagots and limbs of trees that lay festering in the woods, and overgrown with pestilential funguses. In solitary barns far off in the fields, which were rarely visited by anybody, there were found, as the fifth of November approached, heaps of such timber accumulating somehow or other ; in ditches and in thickets, there were similar heaps carefully concealed with withered fern or long grass. Many a pull we had, with ropes, at trunks of trees and logs, that had been brought down the brook in floods, and lay here and there in its channel. When the day came, all these hoards were drawn out, and were seen coming into the village on the shoulders of ragged lads, or in a cart borrowed for the purpose. A tall poll was first set down in the ground, called the POPE, and then round it soon grew a grand pile of posts, rails, logs, and so forth ; besides some loads of coals begged by the lads from house to house for the purpose, in these enticing rhythmical entreaties—

Pray remember
The Fifth of November !
A stick or a stake
For King George's sake,
Timber or coal
For the bonfire pole.

And no sooner did the shades of evening appear than they were chased away again by the lighting up of this magnificent pile, and the incessant flashing of gunpowder. As to the origin of the bonfire, the burning of the Pope, and of Guy Faux, I dare say not one out of a hundred of the spectators knew anything about it, or what it meant. The grand entertainment was to see the huge blaze, and to join in the shout, and, as one of the lads said to my father, who asked him what he wanted gunpowder for,—“to keep flashing, master, to keep flashing!”

But the worst of it was, that farmers of late years grew very testy and tiresome. They did not care so much for the honour of King George as they did for their “sticks and stakes.” As for burning Guy Faux or the Pope, they would rather that they were not burnt at all if they were to be burnt at their expense; and therefore just when the pile was raised, and the fire was put to, and beginning to blaze pleasantly—up would come first one of these grim, sturdy, and troublesome fellows, and cast a very black look at the pile; and then would drag out a piece of timber, and say, “this is my stake”—and another, “this is my post”—and another, “this is my rail.”—One would cry, “thuck, thuck!” and declare that there was the block that he straightened nails on, in the very midst of the fire, and then down came block, timber, and post, and all was soon scattered round in terrible confusion, in spite of squibs and crackers that bounced and flew all around, and all the shouting and pushing, and resistance of the whole mob of lads and bonfire-loving men.

Fifth of November always seems to usher in

WINTER AMUSEMENTS.

To the lively-hearted boy, every season brings its appropriate pursuit. Not even winter, with all its storms and cold can daunt him, or deprive him of his amusement. Nay, it even enhances his keen sense of pleasure. How animating and invigorating is exercise in the clear cold air of winter! His cheek glows, his eye shines brighter, his heart gathers a new sense of health and enjoyment. Sliding, skating, snowballing, snowball-rolling, snowman-making;—these are perpetual pleasures in that season. There is an admirable picture of boys making a snowman, in “Bewick’s Natural History;” which tells better than words can, the enjoyment of such amusements.

Winter is the time too for bird-catching. Then the boy gets his four sticks and his pegs, and makes his trap, scatters a few crumbs in it, and catches many a bird. Then he scatters chaff on the snow, and propping a sieve on a stick of about nine inches long, to which he has a long string tied, he looks through a window or the keyhole of a door, and pulls his sieve down upon numbers of little feathered fools who venture under it. I remember keeping a whole troop of robins, caught in this manner, in a large attic a whole winter, feeding them daily, and taking much pleasure in their contented looks and their grotesque array, for we adorned them with combs and wattles of scarlet cloth stuck on with gum, and made them resemble queer little chanticleers. In the spring we removed their finery and left the window open for them to go out, yet so accustomed were they to the room, that they returned every evening to roost for some time.

Boys also find great delight in seeing corn-ricks got in,

and sharing in the pursuit of rats, mice, weasels and pole-cats, that harbour in them. We used to see the rat-catcher, a tall man with a box of ferrets on his back, and two or three rough queer-looking terriers at his heels, come up to the kitchen door, and we were soon out to see what he was going to do. It was with an almost breathless interest that we saw him take first one, and then another of these long little creatures with their red fiery eyes out of his box, and put them quietly into a hole in a rick, or in the corn-mow in the barn. There was then an interval of profound watching and stillness while the little creature was on its mission to the very heart of the rick or mow ; when suddenly, out would come leaping rats and mice by the dozen : the terriers snapped them up as fast as they appeared, or they were destroyed by the men with their sticks. I have seen a rick taken down, out of which all the corn was totally destroyed by rats and mice, which increase so fast, that were they not thus sharply looked after they would speedily bring the farmer to ruin. I have seen a large wheelbarrow full of these vermin killed at one time.

Such are some of the pleasures of boyhood in the country. Every season brings its pursuits, independently of the common sports of children ;* and the pleasantness of

* Of the common sports of children I have nothing under this head, as they belong to the country and town boy alike. Yet these are as much influenced by the changes of the seasons, as any of the sports or amusements of grown people. At one time one particular play is in vogue, at another time another play ;—marbles, kites shuttlecocks, hoops, etc., as every one must have noticed, make their periodical appearance as regularly as the London season of the fashionables, the opening of theatres, operas, and exhibitions, or the hunting, shooting, and racing seasons of the country gentleman.

nature, and the newness of life, give them a perpetual zest. Man is a being that must be pursuing some object; the boy in the country has a thousand objects of beauty and curiosity to call forth his attention and his ardent spirit, and he is happy as the day is long, at the same time that he is laying up a store of health and strength for years of care, and grave duties that will come as he grows up. Let those talk of the miseries of childhood that will, I never knew misery in mine: and woe to him that makes the glad heart of infancy sad! He sears the bud of future promise—he is making that woful, which God intended to be glad as the angels in heaven. The wisest and the best of men, let them have grown great, and learned, and honourable as they might, have always looked back to the shining days of their early youth, ere care had made its nest in the heart, and said with a sigh, “O that I were a boy once more!” But as we can only be boys once, the only way is to enjoy ourselves as boys in the best and most rational manner that we can.





CHAPTER VII.

THE COUNTRY-BOY'S OCCUPATIONS AND PURSUITS.

HORSEMANSHIP.

I promised to tell my readers how I learned to ride; and I can assure them that the riding-school of a country lad is often a very funny one. The regular riding-master may teach you to ride gracefully, but as to sticking on a horse, commend me to the country lad's riding-school; which is now a common, now a lane, now on ass-back, now on horse-back, now on dog-back, now on cow-back, and not very seldom on the shaggy back of a good thumping

mastiff, or the odiferous chine of a sturdy goat. Anything that *has* a back, and can move, is a nag for a country lad; and good swinging gates and spinning turnstiles afford him no inconsiderable exercise and instruction in the necessary art of sitting at ease on the ridge of a moving thing, whether with legs or without them. It is a well-known fact, attested by Sir Walter Scott and other equally great and learned men, that very few people get properly educated that are not more or less self-educated. And the country lad's equestrian education, is to a certainty generally well seasoned with this essential quality of self-instruction. From the moment that a boy mounts his father's walking-stick, he is perpetually mounting upon something, from the wooden horse bought at the fair or the toy-shop—a creature very spotted, and very straight-legged—ascending most industriously and adventurously through that interesting scale just alluded to, up to the stout hunter, scouring away in the break-neck steeple-chase. The professional riding master may tell you that the boy will still need some scientific instructions, such as to mount with ease and grace, to hold your reins properly in the left hand, your whip in the right, to sit with an air, and to put your horse at will into his different paces, or to shew off his action; but I tell you that a sharp lad will never be without such instructions where there is one good rider to be seen, and where he has eyes in his head. He will soon be told by the groom as he mounts his pony, or by his father even as he mounts his rocking-horse, how to conduct himself; and as he naturally contracts a pride and a pleasure in riding, he will mark everything that he sees in a good and graceful rider, and adopt it; and as for sticking fast in his seat, there never were riders turned out of any school fit to be compared for a moment with those

taught in the country lad's school. I can tell you how I learned to ride, and I can tell you too that I have ridden all sorts of horses, and that in all my life, though sometimes riding every day, and then again for some years not mounting a horse more than half-a-dozen times, I never was thrown more than three times in my life, and that was when I was upon hired horses, which, in jockey phrase, had scarcely a leg left to stand upon, and which tumbled with me so unexpectedly and completely as to send me over their heads. In no single instance have I received the slightest hurt, beyond a sprained thumb.

My first horse was, of course, a stick; my second, one of those spotted straight-legged steeds already mentioned; my third a rocking-horse, and of this particular horse it is difficult to say too much in praise. It is wonderful what horsemanship may be acquired on the rocking-horse. It does that for a lad which is the main thing of all, it gives him confidence. He learns to balance himself, to feel at ease, to hold his whip and bridle, and, in fact, he acquires all the chief principles of this popular science. I have seen children of not more than six and seven years old, on first quitting their wooden horses for their real ponies, mount them with the confidence, and gallop them, and leap them across ditches with all the mastership of grown men.

My next horses were of that miscellaneous class just adverted to. There was a row of turnstiles between our village and the next, which afforded us many an hour's merry practice; three or four lads sitting on one at once, and one or two others twirling them round. Then, there was scarcely a gate that we could get open, but it was swinging to and fro with all its, or rather our, might for hours together; then there were see-saws, or queevels, as we termed them, made of a long plank laid across a log, where

we experienced many ups and downs in the world in a very little time. And, let it be noted that all this was no despicable practice; the twirling round is a good preparation for a similar rotatory motion in a quadruped steed, which it sometimes takes into its head to treat you to; and the swinging and banging of a good active gate is no bad introduction to those sideward motions of a horse, called shying, or starting away from under you, if you are not a pretty good horseman, at the sight or supposition of something supernatural—such as the flutter of a bird out of a hedge, or the rustle of a leaf, or the taking off of a beggar's hat just in the face of you. We rode very actively, too, on any long strong bough that we could pull down in a tree low enough for us to mount upon—not unfrequently even mounted gravestones, as a troop of soldiers, just as Bewick has described a set of lads. Of course, there was not an ass that could be caught on the common or in the lanes that was not pressed into our service, and he that can set an ass a-going against his will, and stick on his back too, is no mean rider. Every one that has made the experiment knows, and he only, all the cunning and the tricks of that reputedly stupid animal. First, you are saluted as you approach it with the most admirably directed kicks. Whichever way you approach, you find the tail and heels of the animal presented to you; or if there be several lads endeavouring to hem him up in a corner, without which I hold it a moral impossibility to catch a good knowing ass at all, the head and heels seem to present themselves very wonderfully towards three-fourths of the company, and the rest are treated to those side lunges and opened-mouthed snatches, that require the quickest eyes and the nimblest heels to get out of the way of.

But suppose the great act of securing and mounting

accomplished, the next great act is to move him. Bewick has shewn you, in a ragged lad standing at the ass's tail with a formidable gorse bush very skilfully applied, the most efficacious of all modes of propulsion; but, this once attained, then indeed is the moment of real difficulty. Off goes the ass for a few paces, then backward he goes as fast, then sideways as rapidly,—this way, that way, and then down goes his head to the ground, and up goes his stern into the air. He that can sit through all these evolutions can sit through anything. And, if he has sate through them, let him still be awake, for the next thing will be for the ass to lay himself leisurely down, and as leisurely begin to roll himself over. This is his last resource, if he does not see a pool that he can run into, where he will remain very quietly for at least half a day with his rider; or, if he does not see a good post or trunk of a tree, or a rough hedge, or a wall, that he can deliberately grind the boy's legs against. Cris Newton will remember his experience of wall-grinding as long as he lives.

Besides asses, rams and swine have been occasionally tried by adventurous lads; but I must confess that they never were any favourites of mine. A goat is a very capital, though not a very agreeably perfumed nag; and a mastiff or Newfoundland dog may do at a pinch; but a sheep is the very essence of obstinacy, to which an ass is not even to be compared; and as for a hog, although Bewick has drawn a regular ragamuffin very successfully careering on a stout boar, I never ventured on one. An old sow or a boar has a deal of malice in it, and will give such savage bites as are dreadful. Then, if you seize it by the ears, and there is nothing else to hold by, it raises a yell enough to rouse the whole neighbourhood, and keeps screaming as if you were going to cut its throat;—this moment it stands

stock still, and in the next it bounces off with a great "grumph," and leaves you on your back in the puddle.

But by far the most successful practice that I and my village mates enjoyed, was in riding to the water—a pool about a quarter of a mile off, where they were taken because they had the double advantage there of drinking and getting their legs well-washed—the sober set of horses that used to turn the gins or great wheels at the coal-pits. Regularly every summer evening we presented ourselves at the stable door, and old Samuel Davis, the groom, used to lift us on by the leg, and give us the halter in our hands, for that was all we had to guide them by, and away we went on their bare backs. Now, regular work kept these horses steady enough, and some of them were grown old in the service: the younger ones had backs as broad and soft as cushions, but old Jack, a white horse at least twenty years old, had a back-bone as high and sharp as any one would desire to sit upon. Samuel Davis said it resembled most in his mind the riding on a razor. However, we were not particular. There were about half a dozen horses, and, when we set out, one lad on each, but by the time that we got to the pool there were often at least half a dozen lads a-piece on some of the easiest-backed ones; for, as we went through the village every lad came running, crying, "let me ride," and "let me ride;" and up the forelegs of the horses they crept, and were pulled forward by those already on. Sometimes we sate all one way, sometimes the other; that is, sometimes with our faces to the horse's head, and sometimes towards the tail; and sometimes we stood straight up upon their backs, which indeed on old Jack's back was by far the easiest position. There was one roguish horse, however, Black Bob, that was a bit of a wag, and when we were in the middle of the

pool would sometimes begin to paw, and then quietly lie himself down in the water, spite of all our kicks and thumps and cries. When he began to paw the water, there was nothing for it but to bring one of the other horses alongside of him in a moment, and let the lads scramble off Bob's back upon it; or otherwise they were sure of a good ducking; and yet it was odd enough that Bob was as much in request as any horse of them all.

But the day came when Peter Scroggins, the grey pony, made its appearance; and there was an end of mounting gates, stiles, boughs, dogs, or old horses; nay, even a very quiet and ancient cow that I used sometimes to back as I fetched the cows up to be milked, presented no charms. Peter was the horse everywhere and on all occasions. On one only occasion was he eclipsed, and that was by a most beautiful cream-coloured pony with a fine long tail, which my father bought, when, and where, and wherefore, I know not, except it were that he had somewhere been struck with its extraordinary beauty, and had a notion of substituting it for Peter. My delight in this lovely creature was unbounded; and what delighted me more than all, was to discover that whenever I stopped it immediately reared up as straight as an arrow on its hind legs. This was to me the greatest amusement; and that everybody might see and enjoy this peculiar feat, I rode it up repeatedly into the front of the house, and there let it rear to its full contentment; a measure by which I very likely saved my neck or my bones, for it would probably, before long, have tumbled over with me, and very likely upon me. My father was so much satisfied with what he saw, and my mother so much more so, that the cream-coloured beauty was speedily disposed of, and Peter Scroggins restored to his wonted favour.

It is scarcely necessary to assert that, during this initiatory process of horseman, or rather assman, and ponyman-ship, it is not necessary to be dressed with particular elegance, but that it *is* as well to be clad in trousers of a hearty and enduring texture.

RABBIT-KEEPING.

I remember the glee with which a boy at school exclaimed on the half-holiday day—"O! Pa and I are going to have such fun; we are going to build the pup-kennel!" But what is building a pup-kennel to building a rabbit-cote? Rabbit-keeping is one of the most favourite and lasting occupations of a boy in the country. It is a rational and healthful employment. It induces a habit of attending to fixed duties at stated hours. His rabbits must be fed, and kept in good order, or his parents, if people of humanity, will soon insist upon their being parted with. A boy ought to keep no living creature that he does not take a lively pleasure in looking after and making comfortable. I remember the alacrity with which I used to be up in the morning, and off into the garden and fields to gather parsley, clover, sowthistles, and other food for them; to clean out their cote, and see that they were all well and enjoying themselves. I remember, too, the pleasure it was to make arrangements at first for keeping them. There was the first entering of the notion into one's head, of how nice it would be to have rabbits; and then the inquiry where they were to be got; and then the hearing of them, and the going to look at them; and the eagerness to have them which the sight of them created. There was the fixing the price, and the actual fetching them home in a basket, and the putting them under the hayloft steps till their cote was

ready. And then the busy pleasure of building that cote. It was to be raised in a corner of the garden, between two walls. Here we built it up with bricks, and laid on our spars, and covered it over with straw and turf. Then we had the door to make, and to hang, and a lock to put upon it. All this Joe Garner and I actually accomplished with our own hands. And then we had it to pave with bricks, or the rabbits would soon burrow out under the walls and run away. Then we had to make a burrow for them, of bricks, covered over with tiles, with a larger place at the end for the nest; and lastly, we had to put in a trough for their milk, and a little trough for their corn. All this done, the rabbits were fetched into their new habitation with much gratification. I don't believe a palace was ever built with half the pride and the pleasure of that rabbit-cote. And what a delight it was to feed them, and watch them for hours, and, ever and anon, to go in and lift off a tile from the burrow to see if they had made a nest. What a grand affair when we found it actually made, and finally found in it six or eight young rabbits, all warmly wrapped in down plucked from the old doe's breast. To see them grow from day to day, till out they came, little round, plump, brown things, not so big as one's fist, with their bright eyes, and really begin to nibble parsley!

My rabbits increased so fast that it was soon necessary to have another abode for them; and this was found in a good large outbuilding, which my father, seeing my attention to them, gave me for the purpose; here they had plenty of room, and prospered hourly. My great ambition was to get the number of forty; but by some fatality, I never could pass the thirty-nine. The fact was, that my stock of rabbits began to be too famous, and the cotes were first one and then another broken into, and a dozen carried

off at a time. Vast was my indignation, and strenuous my endeavours so to barricade and secure them as to prevent the repetition of this plundering, but I never could. Every now and then, spite of locks and iron bars,—bells set to ring when any one entered, and of a scythe placed across the window through which the thieves came, so desperate did my wrath become,—I still was doomed to suffer from the midnight thief, and never to reach the desired forty.

But really they were a fine company of conies. None of your new-fangled Spanish or French rabbits, with lop ears, or white loose down; but good hardy, healthy English rabbits, with close thick fur, and active limbs; brown and grey, black, white, and black-and-white, dun, and tawny. A finer troop of rabbits no lad need to have; and no lad ever found more pleasure in tending his rabbits than I did.

To keep rabbits as they ought to be kept, they should be kept clean and dry. The cote should be carefully swept out every few days, and refuse stalks of their vegetables removed still oftener. They should have as roomy a cote as you can allow them. I am no friend to hutches, except to keep bucks in, that they may not kill or injure the others. But except for this purpose, or the mere purpose of putting up to feed, give me no hutch, but a good roomy cote, where the rabbits can leap about and exercise their limbs, and enjoy their frolics; for when not mewed up in a hutch like a bird in a cage, or a toad in a wall, they are wonderfully sportive; and it is quite amusing to see their leaps, and capers, and grimaces. If you can allow them an open space in front of their cotes, paled round, so that in fine weather they can be let out to enjoy the sunshine, it is all the better. You will be told that in this mode of keeping them you will have them seized on by cats and rats. These

things are to be guarded against, and the actual dangers of your situation once ascertained, they are readily avoided. Many and many a rabbit had I destroyed by men, but few or none by cats or rats, weasels or stoats, which are still more to be feared than either cats or rats.

A cause of destruction equally to be guarded against, is the disease called the Tod. If you give them too much cabbage, you will soon see them begin to grow large in the stomach, to set up their backs and their fur, and very shortly you will find them dead in their cote. To prevent this, you must give them but little cabbage: parsley, clover, lettuce, sowthistle, dandelions, and grass, are all good healthy food; hazel-boughs with the leaves on, I found them very fond of; but whatever green food you give them, they should never be without a handful of good hay now and then, and a mixture of bran and oats in their trough. The best troughs, where they can be got, are such as are made at the brick-yard, formed of the same clay as the brick, and so strong and heavy, that they are neither easily overturned nor broken. Rabbits are also very fond of bread, and equally so of milk.

The bucks should be generally kept apart from the rest, or they will kill the young ones the moment they can find them; and if too many rabbits are confined together, they will fight desperately, and tear the very skin off one another's backs.

KEEPING OF GUINEA-PIGS, PIGEONS, ETC.

GUINEA-PIGS are sometimes kept by boys too, though not nearly such universal favourites. They will live on much the same food as rabbits; they increase very rapidly, and require keeping very clean, or their smell is very disagree-

able. The same is the case with hedgehogs, which will eat apple-peelings, bread and milk, and other things that are about a kitchen; but they have a disgusting smell if their box or cote is not kept very clean. Young hares are sometimes also procured from the fields, and kept, but seldom do so well, or take the fancies of boys so much, as rabbits. Curious fowls too, some lads are fond of having and feeding, but no creatures except rabbits are so interesting to keep as pigeons. Turtle-doves and small birds in cages are more interesting to girls in general, but a flock of pigeons is a charming thing for a boy. They are such beautiful, clean creatures—there is such a variety of kinds: tumblers, carriers, fantails, croppers, jacobins, pouters, runts, turbits, shakers, smiters, owls, nuns, etc.; so varied in colour, in size, in shape, and action, that they attract a deal of notice. It is delightful to see them come rushing down with their whistling wings, from their dove-cote, or from the house-top, every morning, to be fed. They soon know their owner or feeder, and will become as familiar as to settle on his shoulders, hands, head, in fact, all over him if permitted. At a single call they will come swooping down all round him, with their beautiful clean and glossy feathers; strutting about with their red legs, looking at you with their bright eyes, and swelling out their crops, setting up their ruffs, spreading out their tails, or exhibiting those peculiar movements by which each variety is characterised. Then away they will go in a moment with clapping wings, as if struck by one instant and simultaneous thought; away—far up into the air, soaring up and falling down as it were, head over heels, in the very wantonness of pleasure—then up again, and away, as if they were flying for a wager, or were determined to go right off and return no more. Yet presently after, you will see

them come into view again, and drop on the roof of the buildings, strutting, bowing, and cooing most politely to each other.

For pigeons to flourish and do well however, they should have a good roomy dove-cote; none of those little starving boxes stuck against a wall, which will not accommodate more than a pair or two; and that in summer almost scorch them to death, and in winter are as freezing. We had the pleasure of building our dove-cote. In the gable of an out-house, we laid some spars across; bought a lot of hogsheads at the grocer's, and laid a floor of the staves, and made a partition of the staves within the gable, so that we had a good large dove-cote very speedily. The bricklayer soon knocked us a few holes through the wall, and the joiner made us a sort of frontispiece, with holes to enter at, and shelves for the pigeons to alight on—and there was our pigeon-cote. It was a famous piece of work to fill it with shelves all round, partitioned off into little square boxes, where the pigeons might make their nests; and having purchased our pigeons, we had soon the pleasure to see them build and lay and have young ones, and gradually grow into a large flock. It was a continual source of interest to go up into the dove-cote, and see what eggs there were, what pigeons were sitting, and what young ones there were.

There is a certain class of men that are in the habit of procuring a flock of pigeons at the expense of their neighbours—that is, of enticing them by dishonest, and I believe, illegal means. They make what is called a salt-cake, or in some places, I suppose by a corruption of this phrase, a salt-cat. This is a lump of clay well mixed with salt, cummin seeds, and other things. To this all the pigeons in a neighbourhood will flock with avidity, and a man

who has but a pair or two of pigeons may soon have a cote full.

This is the most provoking thing in pigeon-keeping; and it is difficult to devise a remedy for it, except by adopting the same dishonest means. Some people say, where this is the case, don't let your pigeons fly out; but I say, rather than not let them fly out, don't keep them, for you never can see all their beauty and fully enjoy them, except where they can exercise themselves in the free air.

For all these creatures, rabbits, and pigeons, my father's corn-bin was very liberally visited, but he allowed it as liberally; only expecting a couple of fat rabbits and a pigeon-pie occasionally.

DOGS.

It would be a gross omission, in speaking of the animals that contribute to amuse and occupy the country boy, were we to say nothing of that animal of animals, the dog. There never was a lad that was not fond of a dog, and there never was a young dog that was not fond of a lad. They seem to take to each other naturally. They are both fond of play, and of companionship; and nothing is more beautiful than to see a young dog and two or three children playing and scampering about together. It would be difficult to say which of the group enjoyed it most. The dog jumps and runs, doubles, and capers, and plays at bo-peep, with as hearty and right good-will, and as knowingly as the children themselves.

A country lad has an admiration of all dogs—the stately Newfoundland, the graceful greyhound, the sober mastiff, or the cocktailed cur, he admires them all; but the most suitable dog for him, is a terrier or a spaniel. They are of a very companionable disposition. They are as fond of stroll-

ing through fields and woods as he is; and wherever they go, they are always hunting about in hedge-bottoms, in copses, and through woods. The terrier is a lively alert fellow, that is particularly on the look out for just the things that the lad is curious about—rats, mice, stoats, weasels, rabbits, snakes, badgers, hedgehogs, and all that kind of subterranean and dingle-haunting creatures. The spaniel is as fond of hunting after rabbits, hares, and game of all kinds; and a water-s spaniel is very amusing by his readiness to plunge into rivers and pools, and fetch out sticks, or such things as are thrown in for the purpose.

It is good for a lad to have a favourite dog. It is a ready friend that is always at hand, and always delighted to attend and oblige; and it is good for the young heart to have something of the sort to cultivate an attachment to, to care for, and defend. The faithful nature of a dog, cannot fail to make a salutary impression on the mind of a well-dispositioned boy. I shall never forget the observations of my good old grandfather, as a queer shaggy little dog rose up and growled at us as we were crossing a corn-field in which several women were gleaning; and on looking what he was about, we found he was set as watch over a sleeping child of one of the poor women. The old gentleman was delighted with the incident, and seating himself on a sheaf, he involuntarily addressed the funny little animal in what may be termed

A DOGGED LECTURE.

“Well, thou art a shaggy and funny-looking animal, sure enough! and as sure as thy ears have a lynxish look, and thy open mouth shews eagerness, and thy eyes, and thy whiskers, and thy grey bundle of a body, are full of a laughter-stirring queerness, so surely hast thou an honest

heart, thou old-fashioned beast! Sleep child in confidence, Trim, or Tray, or Tinker, or whatever be his name, and it is one of them, will let no harm come nigh thee. Scarcely a wasp, or a bee, or a cockchafer, will have leave to buzz near thee. I would trust my only child in thy keeping, honest old soul! Why, as I look again at thy grey and watchful visage, even while I am ready to burst with laughter at it, it brings all sorts of stories of dog-faithfulness to my mind; stories of mountains and wildernesses, of seas, and regions of long night and frost, where thy four-footed brethren have long signallised their fidelity to men. Lion-heartedness! 'tis a great word, and for ever sounded in our ears, but what is it after all to dog-heartedness? a word that to three-fourths of our wise men would seem to indicate nothing but what is mean and ignoble. Lion-heartedness! poh! what have these lions ever done for mankind in comparison to thee, honest Tinker? When did a lion watch a sleeping child? When did a lion defend the house, the chamber, the peace and life of his master? From the king's coach to the carrier's wagon, is it the lion or the dog that is the champion of its safety, fearing no man, however monstrous, or death however cruel?" "O! but there was Androcles?" said I. "Ah, that is a fine story, Will, if it be true," said the old gentleman. "A lion that shewed gratitude, and followed the fortunes of its benefactor,—verily I am afraid it is a fable; but true or false, for one lion in the history of the world, a million dogs are following their masters every day, and that with no servile spirit, nay, with no cause for gratitude, but often for the mere wages of thumps and bangs, as if destined to exercise the very highest spirit of philosophy, and return good for evil, like true Christians themselves?

"Lion-heartedness!—for one lion that has obeyed his

keeper, how many have bitten off their heads? I say, then, away with lion-heartedness, and dog-heartedness for me! I tell thee again, Tinker, thy honest phiz brings wondrous things to my mind. Gough, on the mountains of Helvelyn, wasting in the winds, and his dog wasting by his side in unconquerable fidelity; the wolf and the bloody cradle of Beth Gelert; the dog of Montargis, and the dogs of the Great St. Bernard, are all before me,—more lion-hearted than any lions that I ever yet heard of.

“See, Will, how this oddity of a dog can verify what even Milton says—

‘They also serve, who only stand and wait.’

Let hounds traverse, in loud chorus and with upturned tails, fields and forest in the chase; let greyhounds pursue in couples or in leash the hare; let the shaggy otter-hound follow the banks of lake or river for his subtle antagonist; let terriers, all alert, scour after their prey through thickets and brake; let the traveller's dog tramp after his master's gig, from town to town, dirty and footsore; let the cur lead the blind man on his way; and the shepherd's dog range the moors and mountains at his bidding: but the vocation of this odd old fellow is certainly to

‘Stand and wait.’

And what a large class of dogs, Will, follow just that vocation. The sturdy mastiff waits in yards and warehouses, the guardian of great wealth. We hear his hoarse voice long before we see him in his dark corner in his tub-house, standing like Diogenes, as sturdy and uncompromising. He barks long before he, or, perhaps, any one sees us; for his sharp ears inform him of the tread of a stranger. The fine Newfoundland dog waits at the door of the hall, an object at once of befitting state and defence. He lies, as it

were, in a very majestic and benevolent silence, occasionally rising up, and pacing here and there, with slow steps and a graceful swing of his tail. The little dog waits in the old woman's cottage while she goes to market, and has nobody else to leave as her deputy and guardian over her few goods. The husbandman's dog waits like Trim here, in the summer fields, lying through the day by the clothes and provisions of the whole company in constant watchfulness. The carrier's dog waits under his cart in the town while he goes to and fro on the demands of his calling, and neither sturdy thief, nor mischievous urchin, with longing eyes, dare draw near. The woodman's dog waits in the forest by the bottle and bag, while his master, from day to day, levels the mighty oaks, or burns charcoal for the needs of the distant town, blessing him in the very words of Scripture, 'in basket and in store;' and the bloody forest laws in former days, which decreed all other dogs to be killed or maimed in the royal forests, made an exception in his favour. But the dog Argus—the dog of Ulysses, outwaited them all, eh, Will?—as you'll find in Homer one of these days,—for he waited twenty years for the return of his master from the siege of Troy, and then lay down and died at his feet."

Here the old man rose, and taking me by the hand, went on, still talking of the many wonderful qualities of dogs; and I often thought of them afterwards, and firmly believed them all centred in my own dog Pry—a white terrier that I had for no less than fourteen years! I never liked, and never shall like, any dog like that. He was the constant companion of all our rambles; and many were the rats, and snakes, and hedgehogs, that he hunted out and destroyed. The hedgehogs, indeed, as in our opinion harmless creatures, we compelled him to spare. Many are

the feats and instances of sagacity of that dog that I could relate, but I must satisfy myself with one. We used to attend the Friends' meeting, which was two miles distant, and was a pleasant walk across the fields. Pry used to attend with us, and behaved as well and quietly as anybody, laying himself down under the seat that I occupied, and scarcely moving till the meeting was over. On one occasion, as my father was putting up his horse in the stable which adjoined the meeting, Pry, who was in the stable, began fiercely to bark, and scratch under some boards that lay on the floor. As the Friends had already gone into the meeting, my father called Pry away, and drove him out with his stick; but he rushed back again, and renewed his scratching with such fury, that my father and another person who came in thought it best to see what occasioned his excitement. They therefore removed the boards, when a large hole, a burrow, discovered itself in the ground, down which Pry descended with great eagerness, and presently emerged again with a dead duckling in his mouth. Greatly were my father and the other person surprised, but their wonder was every moment increased by the dog's fetching out, one after another, no less than fifteen young ducklings, all dead; and, last of all, dragging out, after a hard battle, in which even he had been compelled to howl out two or three times, a huge polecat, the destroyer of the ducks! The smell which the creature made was so horrible that they were compelled to throw it out of the stable, and there, with the fifteen ducklings beside it, left it till the meeting was over. After meeting, much was the marvelling over these matters, and many were the praises bestowed upon Pry. A farm-house stood just by, inhabited by a rich old farmer of the name of Grammer. He was sent for, and on coming and look-

ing at the ducks, he exclaimed, in his broad Derbyshire dialect, "Lard bless me! Lard bless me!—why those are my ducklings! Well, did onybody sey sich a seyt? My dame wondered how and where they vanished to. Every dee they were gooин—gooин—gooин—like snow i' the sun—an nubboddy could tell whire they went tow. By guy! and what a rousing owd fommard! They mud well goo—hey'd a soon a cleared aw ar' yard o' fowls. Well, that *is* a dog! isn't he? Hey's worth his weight in gowd! O lorts! O lorts! what havoc!" And with that he picked up the young ducks, holding them in a bunch by the legs, and with the fomart in the other hand, hobbled off to shew the monster and his victims to his dame.





CHAPTER VIII.

JUVENILE MECHANICS.

AN active clever lad in the country never need feel dull; —never experience that miserable sensation of wanting something to do. The objects of attraction, of employment, and amusement, that I have already mentioned, would be enough to prevent that; but if a lad has a turn for mechanical inventions and labours, there is another vast and inexhaustible source of pleasure opened to him. I remember, though I never was a very mechanical fellow, the pleasure I used to enjoy building my saw-mills, in making shoe-heel bricks, in watching the operations of the various vil-



lage tradesmen, and in erecting our rabbit-cotes and dove-cotes. I remember too, the delight with which I used to erect water-mills. Wherever I found a sudden descent—a good spout of water in the brook or the ditches, there I set down two forked sticks, got an old tin bottom, and cutting nicks all round the circumference, turned one piece one way, and the next another; thus alternating them all round, so as to form a broad surface for the water to play upon. In the centre of this mill-wheel I then punched a hole, and putting another stick through for an axle, laid it across the two forked sticks, and the stream spouting upon it, kept it spinning, and fizzing, and spurting the water round gloriously. These mills I used to visit occasionally, to see that all was right, and there they were spinning away for weeks and months together.

But a really clever lad with a mechanical turn, not only gathers present pleasure, but lays up a great deal of really valuable knowledge. The simple and patriarchal state of society in old-fashioned villages and small towns, allows him to go and see all that is going on. He watches the different artizans at their labours, and makes friends amongst them; so that he can go and hammer, and saw, and file to his heart's content. It is true that more and higher kinds of mechanical operations may be seen in large towns and cities, but then a boy has rarely the same easy access to them; nor can he be suffered to go amongst workmen with the same confidence that he will be welcome, and that he will not be in the way of evil communication.

Charles Botham, a young relative of mine who lived in a small town in Staffordshire, was the most perfect example of what enjoyment and advantage a boy may derive from mechanical amusements that I ever knew. He was a fine

active lad, of a frank and intelligent disposition that made him a universal favourite. He was quite at home in the yards and shops of ropemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, watchmakers, turners, and I know not how many trades besides. When he was a little lad of not more than four years old, he used to sit on the hearth-rug of an evening, or of a winter's day, cutting little logs of wood with his knife into windmills, boats, and ships. The boats and ships that he made from that time till he was grown quite a youth, some of which still remain, were acknowledged by every one to be admirable. Some were made before he had ever seen a real ship, from pictures of them; and though not so correct as they otherwise would have been, were very surprising. When he had actually seen ships and become familiar with all parts of them, he constructed some which were so correct, even to the smallest piece of rope, that the most experienced seaman could not detect a single error. One of these ships we have now in our possession, a very beautiful thing.

But ships were only one kind of his mechanical productions. Whatever he wanted for his own amusements, he made with the utmost ease. His fishing-rods were of his own making, even to the iron ferrules; his lines were of his own making too. Having got some silk of his mother, he ran off to the rope-yard, and soon came back with beautiful lines of his own twisting. He made his own little wheelbarrows, garden rake, and other tools. At the joiner's he made all kinds of little boxes for his mother and sisters; at the shoemaker's he learned to make shoes; at the watchmaker's he learned to make an actual clock of wood; and then from a drawing in an *Encyclopædia* proceeded to construct with the utmost accuracy a perambulator, an instrument to measure distances, measuring a mile

on the highway, and striking with its bell at the exact spot, as well as those made by regular artists.

When a very little fellow, if he got a sarsenet-roller from a draper, he would cut it into short lengths, and carve it with his knife into little windmills of the most perfect construction. They were not such mills as rise in a regular cone from the base, but of that kind which are built of wood, and stand upon a stout pillar and frame, on which they are turned to the wind as it may vary; they had their sails, door, window-holes, and steps, all constructed with the nicest accuracy. He used to make for the kitchen, spill-boards, rolling-pins, towel-rollers, toasting-forks, working in all kinds of wire—of which he made two beautiful bird-cages. When he was ten or twelve years of age, I first became acquainted with him, and then he had his own little shop over the stable, with his turning-lathe and tools of all sorts, and he never was so happy as when he could find out that he could make anything for you. A screw nutcrack, a wafer-seal, tobacco-stopper, a snuff-box, a set of nine-pins, any thing, he was ready to make for his different acquaintances. Going on a visit to a relative of his at a distance (when about fourteen), who was a large farmer, he set on and mended up rakes, forks, flakes, gates, posts, rails, paling of the garden, everything, in fact, that wanted doing. If a lock was out of order, he soon had it off, and put it to rights; in short, there was no mechanical job that he was not master of, and quickly accomplished, to the astonishment of the family. In fact, had he been thrown, like Robinson Crusoe, on an uninhabited island, he would have speedily out-Crusoed Crusoe himself, and have surrounded himself with protection from the elements and domestic comforts. To such a lad as this, it is astonishing how all odds and ends of things become treasures—nothing is lost;

bits of wood, scraps of leather, tin, iron, old nails, screws, etc., are hoarded up, and turn, in his hands, into things of account. This fine lad had a box jam full of all this sort of things—old watch-springs, bits of chain, hooks, buttons, wires, anything and everything, which were ready for purposes no one could dream of at any one time, but were of essential use, and just the very thing at the right season.

Such a youth could not avoid becoming, in after-life, a first-rate character in whatever he undertook. His faculties and inventive genius were all called into exercise, and strengthened to a degree capable of grappling with any occasion. Such men, no doubt, in their boyhood, were Brindley, Arkwright, Watt, Smeaton, and those other great men who have done so much for the wealth and fame of England, and indeed, for the good of the world at large. In the mysterious plans of Providence, this excellent and gifted youth was called to another life at the early age of nineteen; but the entire pleasure which he enjoyed in his brief career in the exercise of his mechanical talents, and the esteem that his inventive ardour, and cheerful, kindly disposition won him from all that knew him, were sufficient to stimulate any well-disposed boy to follow his example.





CHAPTER IX.

EMPLOYMENTS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

THE thing in the country which, next to one's own busy schemes, interests one, is observing the different employments of other children. I was, as I have said, thrown principally, while at home, amongst the village lads, and I used to see them at their work; for Joe Garner, Cris Newton, and the rest, had to go out and work in the fields when they could get jobs to do, and as they were often at work in my father's fields, I used then to go and spend a good deal of time with them. I used to pity those lads, and think how hard it was, when we might have been strolling a good

way off birds'-nesting, that they must be confined to a field picking stones off the grass, or looking after the lambs; but I don't pity any such lads now. I have seen and heard a little more of the world, and the life of village children seems to me quite heavenly, compared to that of thousands of town children. I have heard the little sweeps come knocking at the door in the dark winter's morning ever so early; and then I have heard them knocking in the chimney; and then their shrill voices screaming at the top of the chimney, in the sharp morning air, as I lay in my warm bed. I have heard of the woes of orphans, and I have heard of factory children!—little wretches that have fallen into the fangs of poverty, and poverty's hardest tyrants, cruel task-masters and task-mistresses over those that have none to defend them.

Since these things have come to my knowledge, O! how happy and blithe seems even the worst life of country children! Why, thinking of these town cruelties, and then turning to the country, I seem to see only rosy children rolling on green slopes, wandering through green dells and woods of wonder, laughing and singing, and shouting in glad littles troops beneath the village tree, or busy on some sunshiny bank, making mills and weighing out dust for sugar: or I see them collected round the cottage hearth at night, listening to tales of rustic marvel—Jack the Giant-killer—Jack and his Bean-stalk—Tom Thumb, and Little Red Riding-hood; or playing on the ample carpeted floor of the hall, the objects of fond contemplation to those happy and refined beings who regard them as the most precious of their many possessions, and whose names and virtues they are to perpetuate.

No, I have no pity for country lads in general. They have, it is true, to blow their fingers over turnip-pulling on

a sharp frosty day, when the farmer comforts them with telling them that they must pull on till they have no feeling in their fingers, and then pull on again till they feel them full of pins and needles; they get bumps on the ice, and chilblains to plague them o' nights when in bed, and masters rousing them up in the dark, just as their chilblains get easy, to fodder and be off to plough; but, bless me! what are these things to a cotton-mill!—to a bump on the bare head with a billy-roller, or the wheels of a spinning-jenny pulling an arm off!

I have seen labourers dibbling in beans, as the farmers call it, that is, walking backward with a sharp-pointed staff in their hands, and making holes in a ploughed field as they went, while three or four little boys followed each labourer, popping beans into the holes they made. I have seen this on a cold day in November or February, when the east wind was driving over the field most savagely, and the little urchins have looked red and blue with the cold, and have blown their fingers, and slapped them on their sides, endeavouring to warm them, and yet could not; and I pitied them,—but I do not pity them now.

I have seen little boys set to drive birds from a corn-field just sown, in the early spring. Afar off in the solitary fields they watched and wandered to and fro, from early dawn to nightfall, till their task became insupportably weary. Not a soul had they to exchange a word with; they had their dinner in a bag, a clapper to drive away the birds, and they would be found making a miserable attempt with turfs, and sticks, and dry grass, to raise a sort of screen against the wind and rain. I have found such a one cowering under a shed of this sort, or under a high bank, in the midst of Sunday, while the village bells sounded at a distance merrily, and told of people assembling hap-

pily together. Not one of his holiday companions were near him, and his only mode of making the time bearable appeared to be attempting to obtain a fire by the help of his tinder and matches, and his great horn-lantern; but the sticks were all wet, and they hissed, and smoked, and went out. I have seen this, and I pitied him,—but I do not pity him now.

I once saw a little fellow of this sort who stirred my sympathy exceedingly. It was a cold, raw, foggy day in February; the wet hung in myriads of drops on the hedges, and the dampness of the air clung about you with a dispiriting chillness. I was passing through Sherwood Forest, and across a farm brought into cultivation in the midst of its solitary waste. As I passed a tall hedge, I heard a faint, shrill cry, as of a child's voice, that alternating with the sound of a wooden clapper, sung these words:—

We've ploughed our land, we've sown our seed,
We've made all neat and gay;
So take a bit, and leave a bit,
Away birds, away!

I looked over the hedge, and saw a little rustic lad apparently about seven years old, in his blue carter-frock, with a little bag hanging by his side, and his clapper in his hand. From ridge to ridge of a heavy ploughed field, and up and down its long furrows, he went wading in the deep soil, with a slow pace, singing his song with a melancholy voice, and sounding his clapper. There was something in the appearance of that little creature in that solitary place, connected with his unvaried occupation and his soft and plaintive voice, that touched powerfully my heart; and, as I went on, I still heard his song, fainter and fainter in the deep stillness. I came back in the evening, seven

long hours afterwards. The twilight was closing in; yet as I rode over a slight hill, that weak, melancholy voice again reached my ear. All that weary day, that lone, weary little creature had been traversing that field, with his melancholy song and his dolorous clapper. Never did I feel a livelier pity for any living thing! At the same moment I met a little girl, and I saw by the earnest expression of her countenance, that it was his sister. "What little bird-boy is this?" I asked. "It is my brother Johnnny, sir," she replied; "it is the first day that he has ever worked; but my father said it was now time that he did something towards getting his living; and so he made him a clapper as he sate by the fire at night; and my mother made him a bag for his dinner; and he was very proud of his job, and thought he was going to be a man; but a neighbour who passed this afternoon and asked him how he liked his task, said he was crying; and that he said, the silence frightened him, and he wished himself at home again, and so I am going for him; and I dare say he is tired enough!" In truth, he was tired enough, and I pitied him, but I don't pity him now.

I have seen boys tending cattle in the Scottish dales, where they have no hawthorn hedges, as we have, because they say, "they harbour birds, and other vermin," but they make hedges of old women and children; that is, they set them to keep the cattle from the corn. I have seen the boys trying all schemes to while away the time; hopping, leaping, striding this way and that, cutting the turf with their knives into their names, and the names of their dogs; and twisting the shapes of their faces into other shapes; bowling stones; and singing, and shouting at the top of their voices; while their clever dogs kept their eye upon the cattle, and did the actual business of the day.

These boys too, in their weary loneliness, I pitied; but I don't pity them now.

There are children that are set to pick up a few pence by watching a gate, to open it for travellers. I know a gate on a distant heath where a little girl is commonly to be found. She goes there after breakfast, takes her dinner, and stays till night. As you approach, you see her seated on a bank, or peeping from behind the gate-post; and whether you ride or walk, she opens the gate. Sometimes she prevails on two or three of her playfellows to go and spend a summer afternoon with her, and then it is a merry time. They contrive to find a hundred devices of pleasure on the heath. They collect flowers, and plant a garden, and enclose it with circles of pebbles. They pursue the blue dragon-flies by the neighbouring clear brook, and listen to the strange cries of the snipe and wild-duck, and coot and water-hen, that haunt the sedgy marsh through which it runs. But in the cold weather, she is a wretched little sojourner, wrapped up in her old red cloak, and standing in snow, rain, and wind, eight or nine long hours for a few pence, perhaps for nothing—not even a civil "thank you," from those who drive through in their glittering carriages.

I knew two or three ragged lads that kept watch upon a gate on a road that I often passed some years ago. The gate opened upon a common. On the approach to it lay little slips of waste land by the road side, covered with broom and gorse. Once as I passed, I saw one of these slips enclosed with a rough fence; presently after, as I passed it again, I beheld a little hut raised of rough stone, covered with dry fern, and the windows made of oiled paper. A poor, exceedingly poor family had taken possession of it, and it seemed to swarm with ragged children.

In my succeeding rides past this little enclosure, I observed with curiosity the progress of improvement, for there was improvement at work. The garden grew fuller of plants, and was better cultivated. It, in time, had a goodly row of gooseberry and currant bushes; its rows of peas and beans, its onion and carrot beds, its marigold flowers to flavour their pottage, its little borders of sage and rue, and winter-savory; even its house-side border of flowers, with conspicuous bushes of rosemary and sweetbrier. The house itself grew slowly into better state. First, its rough walls were plastered, then its fern roof gave place to one of good thatch, its paper windows were succeeded by real glass ones. Young pear-trees were nailed to its walls, and apple-trees were planted in the garden. Presently afterwards, I espied a pigsty—the settlement was evidently flourishing. Presently I saw another piece of land enclosed; the garden lay on one side of the house, this on the other. The man, said I, grows ambitious, what wants he this for? The next time I passed, I saw the piece was dug, and covered with a springing crop of wheat. Here was a corn-field indeed! What can the man have more? He had something more—a beehive! and year after year, I saw one hive after another set by the side of the first, till there was absolutely a row of nine under a shed, which had been lengthened every year. The trees in the garden grew up, and were covered with fruit; the garden grew perfectly thick and bushy with its exuberant crops. But if the house and garden had flourished, so had the children—I never saw such a swarm—the poor man was obliged to lengthen his house as he had lengthened his bee-shed. There were girls growing up fast; one was seen going to and fro, helping in the house; another was fetching water, and going in her little grey cloak to the village on errands;

a third was carrying about a great fat baby, half as large as herself. Two ragged lads lay rolling and playing on the greensward before the dwelling, keeping a sharp lookout up and down the lane, to see if any one approached the gate, and at the first glimpse of a person away they bounded like young roes. It mattered not whether the passenger was on horseback or foot, open the gate they would, and stood expecting each a halfpenny. It was then my amusement to put my pony into a smart trot, as if I would outgo the lads and open the gate myself; and then what a scamper and a puffing was there! Their wild shaggy hair flew and danced in the sunshine—their ragged jackets seemed as if they would be shaken off their backs, and their bad, loose shoes on their stockingless feet went slip-slap on the smooth, hard road. The nearer I came the faster they scurried on, till off they threw their shoes, and ran and bounded like young bucks. It was amazing to see their speed, and laughable to witness their wild anxiety.

To my surprise I one day found these lads in capital clothes, and mentioning the circumstance to the gentleman to whose house I used to ride that way, "Aha!" said he, "I can tell you how that happened. I and one of my brothers agreed to play them a prank; so we measured them accurately with our eye, and got each a jacket and trousers made, and took them with us the next time we went. When the lads were running and had nearly reached the gate, we spurred on our horses, and, coming up with them, off we leaped and seized each a lad. At first there was a terrified silence; and then, as we began to strip off their rags, a most terrible uproar and struggling, as if we were about to strip them of jewels and silks instead of rags; but as the new clothes were unfolded on the road, the clamour as suddenly ceased; they slipped

their bare red legs into the trousers as nimbly as possible ; they were buttoned up in a moment, and giving each of them a gentle slap on the shoulders, off they ran at full speed, looking each moment down at themselves and then back at us, as if jealous we should pursue, and undo all that we had done.

"We laughed heartily at our joke, and went on. When we returned some days afterwards, we no sooner came in sight of the hut than we saw the lads jump up from the greensward, and out came father, mother, great girl, middle girl, lesser girl, and least girl of all, with the baby in her arms,—with bows and curtsies, and most vociferous thanks for this little act of kindness."

I used to pity these children, but I don't pity them now. I pity scarcely any ragged, or cold, or solitary lad that I see in the country ; the hardships of factory children are the hardships of their lives, but those of country children are but the pinchings of a short season now and then. *They* are not compelled to take their food as they stand before never-ceasing machines—fit images of eternal torture—in the hot and flocky atmosphere of a mill ; they do not meet as strangers from the swarming dens of an overgrown town, but they know each other from their births ; the sky is above their heads—the vital air from the hills and the seas rushes over their frames. They walk about at liberty, and go from moderate hours of labour to comfort and sound sleep. The children working in the brick-yards with bare legs and bodies smeared with clay, or those in the hop-grounds of England, picking the hop-flowers that nod luxuriantly from the tall poles, while other merry children are bringing them to them ; the boy who sits for long hours, turning the great wheel of the rope-maker ; I ask who can pity them ? And where should we find the other

country children? Why, in gardens and shrubberies, weeding beds of flowers and culinary herbs, and carrying away dead boughs and cuttings of trees for the gardeners. We should find them in summer, active in the hay and corn-field; keeping watch, armed with a rod of office tipped with a piece of scarlet cloth, over geese and turkeys with their broods. We should descry them gathering berries on the sunny heaths, and mushrooms from the old pastures. In the autumn the acorns come pattering down from the oaks for them to gather; the chestnut and the triangular beech-nut lie plentifully in the woods; and the nuts exhibit their tawny clusters for their eager hands. They are gleaners abroad, and thrashers of their little harvests at home; helping their mothers to spread out a sheet on the greensward of the open common, and winnowing their little heap of grain in the free winds of heaven.

Happy dogs are they all! Pity them! Phoh! I love them every one, and delight to remember them as making the country pleasant by their presence. Hark! I seem even now to hear the bird-boys blowing their horns in the distant fields, or a score or two of these country urchins shouting after the harvest-home wagon.





CHAPTER X.

DAYS AT MY GRANDFATHER'S.

WELL, you know where my grandfather lived: I have already told you that it was at the Fall, below Heanor, a village of Derbyshire. As I have said, his ancestors had lived there for many generations, and his son, now an old man, is living there too—the last of his race. When he goes, the family and the name go from the Fall.* You know it is a pleasant place. It stands on a verdant lawn facing the south, near the bottom of a wide and extensive valley. From the front windows you see pleasant uplands running southward; and at the top, from amongst trees, rise the

* This has happened. Since the former edition of this little work, my uncle is dead, at the age of eighty.—The Redferrs have ceased for ever at the Fall!

tall square tower of the church and the tops of the village houses; and behind, again, stretches away the valley, and a fine expanse of uplands on the other side of it; shewing its sloping fields, and hedge-rows, trees, and scattered farm-houses. The lawn aforesaid is a famous place for young flocks of turkeys, guinea-fowls, and pea-fowls wandering about in the summer months, and for mushrooms, which used to spring up as fast as we could traverse the field, and give us many a chase in collecting them, morning, noon, and evening, in their season. Behind the house was the farm-yard; and there were various dogs in their kennels—greyhounds, and pointers, and spaniels,—for shooting and coursing might be said to be, rather than anything else, the business of the Redfers for ages. And here was a fox in his kennel, too, which used to lie with his bright eyes winking, and pretending to be asleep, to see if he could not beguile the fowls, by his apparent unconsciousness, to step within the circle which his chain had made before his kennel; but they knew him too well. They walked with the utmost composure on the very verge of the ring, but never, in the smallest possible degree, within it. And there were the pea-fowls climbing upon the trees, and the walls, and house-tops, and crying like great cats, but with voices of tenfold power. And there was the great goat, about which I shall tell you presently; and there were the cows, and the great strong bull, and the ferrets with their red eyes; for my grandfather had a rabbit-warren, and used those little animals to go into the rabbit-burrows and catch the rabbits. And there was old Ralph, the raven, that carried off the silver spoons, and thimbles, and I know not what, from the house, and buried them in the thatch of the barn,—and that was afterwards shot by a man at the fair, whither poor Ralph had followed some of

the family. And I'll tell you what—there was a starling that had his tongue slit with an old sixpence, and had been taught to talk ; and he used to sit in a sunny gutter over the kitchen door, watching the maid-servants going in and out about their work, and would say—"Molly Gibson, why don't you milk the cows?" or, "Molly Gibson, you've left the gate open."

Well, these things, you may be sure, occupied our attention, and caused no little excitement for many an hour; and then, the house was screened on the north by a tall wood, where the rooks built by thousands ; and below, this wood was again flanked by a plantation of dark fir-trees ; and many a day's entire occupation did we find there in seeing the young rooks shot in spring with a cross-bow ; in running to catch them as they fell ; in climbing to get at them when they got entangled in the boughs of some of the lower trees. The trees that contained the nests of the rooks were so high and full of tenter-hooks that there was no climbing them ; but the lower trees it was grand fun to mount, and shake their long boughs where the dead rooks had lodged, and send them tumbling to the ground. That wood in spring was full of primroses, and such is the force of association, that I seldom see primroses without thinking of rooks, or hear rooks cawing without seeming to smell primroses. All amongst the low boughs of the younger fir-trees in that wood were thistle and blackbird nests in spring, almost without end.

Well, you may be sure this old house of the Fall was a tempting place to us when we were children. I used to go and stay there for a fortnight at a time, and, as it was only about half a mile from home, I could run up there any time. My grandfather had one son, and he was a great sportsman, and was the person whom I have already said

used to take his gun in spring, as an excuse, and go a birds'-nesting with us through the lanes and woods for miles round; and we were very fond of running about with him to see him shoot, and to carry his bag for him in the shooting season, full of hares and partridges, and sometimes of winter birds, snipes, woodcocks, wild ducks, and such like things, till we could hardly move under them. The old gentleman's sporting days were over, but he was very fond of telling us of them; and he used to take his stick and hobble out with us into the fields, telling us how huge flocks of small blue pigeons used to come sometimes in winter, and cover all the roofs of his buildings as thick as possible. "But," said he, "I don't know how it is, they don't come now-a-days." And then he took us to the brook, which runs winding along the bottom of the field at the back of his house. A beautiful brook it was, turning and winding here and there, all under the shade of alder and willow trees, and great bushes of hawthorn and hazels. I say it was a delicious place, for the water in some places went chiming over the gravelly bottom; in others, settling into deep pools beneath overhanging roots of great trees; and in others, spreading itself out in the sunshine, without a bush about it to keep off the open day, but between green sloping banks which it was delightful to rest upon.

I think there is a world of pleasure in such a bank as that. What a quiet, yet deep delight there is, in lying on a warm summer day, and hearing the water run with a silver lapsing sound, and seeing it throw little circles of light on the bank and the boughs above it; and to see the little shining flies with their long legs marching about on its surface; and others, like little beetles of bright blue steel, all in one place, keeping up such a dance of mazy intricacy as is wonderful. And to see the water-rats come peeping out

of their holes and plop into the water; and the fish dart past like arrows; or come up out of some deep place, all unconscious of your presence, and therefore as full of a quiet laziness as possible; balancing themselves on their slowly-waving fins, and rise up to the very top of the water in the face of the sunshine, and bask in it with an evident and intense delight, and then turn slowly down again; or, at a glimpse of you, go off with a jerk and a dart inconceivably swift. Ay, and to see the great pikes lie basking on the water as still as floating sticks; and see all the birds—the blackbirds and thrushes that haunt such places, the little chiff-chaff, and the wren, and the kingfisher, skimming past with a quick cry, or sitting with his red breast full opposite to you, on some old mud-covered bough over the brook, watching for his prey.

And here to fish and to bathe;—to splash into some place deep enough for fun and not deep enough for danger; some half-dozen of you, laughing, shouting, leaping, frisking, splashing, and dashing, and rioting. O! that is glorious game on a summer's day. Yes! there is a world of pleasures in one of those old brooks;—and we might write a whole paper on it—but I was only going to say, that the old gentleman took us there, and shewed us where, when *he* was a boy, he saw something, a little round thing shining and twinkling in the grass; and he fetched his father's gun—he so little, and it so big that he could hardly carry it—and shot at that shining thing, and running to the place, found that he had shot—a woodcock! And he shewed us again, where, as he was walking with two of his dogs, they suddenly and to his great surprise, started a fine buck, with great branching horns, from a thicket. The buck plunged into the stream, and the two brave dogs plunged in after it and held it down, and he only awoke

from his astonishment by finding himself also in the water with his knife in his hand, and the buck slain. The old man's eyes sparkled as he told us how he ran and called to his men for help; and how they carried the buck home, and skinned it, and cut it up, and set up its horns on the kitchen wall, and there they are to this day.

Was not this a good adventure? But I must tell you of an adventure of my own at this brook—not a sham adventure, but a real one—not such as I used to amuse my good grandfather with, as the old man sate in his easy chair—a set of imaginary occurrences that I cannot tell how they got into my head, but at which the old man used to laugh amazingly,—as thus:—“Grandpapa, as I was going along such a hedge-side, I had like to have found a hornet's nest; and I went a bit further, and I had like to have found a snake; and then I went a bit further and I had like to have found a great gimlet.” The old man's amusement at these cock-and-bull stories of a boy, probably gave the stimulus partly to invent them, and probably to relate what I had some childish apprehension that I might find. But our real adventure was this:—

We used to go, several of us, to catch fish in the brook, by lading out a pool; that is, we got spades, and stripping off our clothes, we went into the brook, and made a bank across it with turf, and stones, and earth, completely cutting off the stream, and damming it up. This was done just above some deep pool where we supposed there were fish. We then made a bank across below the pool, and with a kind of basket, there called a wisket, we set about and laded all the water out of the pool. You may be sure we worked away famously; there we were in the stream naked as frogs, and smeared all over with clay, like brickmakers; and no time was to be lost, lest the weight of the stream

above should break down our embankment. And every now and then it began to give way, and the boys set to watch it and keep it up, cried out for help, and then away we had to run, and dig, and pile up fresh turf and strengthen our mound, and then turn again to our lading. As the water began to get low, and we began to see the fishes, we were full enough of bustle and glee. The bankers and the laders could not be kept to their work, but came to run after the fish, and there was pretty scrambling and catching at the slippery fishes that darted about from one side to the other of the pool. Sometimes we were running one over the other; sometimes we came slipping down in the mud, and plumping over head in the slushy water; and while we were all so busy and full of laughter, in would come the water with a great burst and half drown us, and we had our bank to build up, and our labour to begin anew. But when all these frolics and accidents were over, and the pool was nearly empty, then there *was* glory and joy over the great fishes that flapped their tails, and tried to escape us and could not. We carried them out with shouts of exultation, and put them into the baskets.

Well, we had been thus engaged one fine summer day, and with our baskets full of fish we climbed up the bank of the brook, let in the water, and, after washing ourselves well, prepared to put on our clothes; when, behold! where *were* our clothes? There had been a thief! Hats and jackets, and stockings and shoes, were gone by wholesale! Never was there such a consternation! we looked here and there. We ran in different directions, and peeped behind every bush and turning of the stream; but nothing was to be seen. The few articles left were scattered in confusion. Somebody had approached while we were in our vociferous raptures, and carried off our clothes! Five times at least,

did we search the same places over; and now, we recollect for the first time, that we had been lading just by a footpath. It was clear enough some passer-by had been tempted by the booty of our garments, and had carried them off.



Then there began a loud lamentation. We were now as noisy with crying and roaring for our loss, as we had been with eager pursuit and triumph over our fish. And our fish! why, we were almost ready, in the foolish anger of our loss, to cast them into the stream. Ay, great pikes as long as my arm, and eels still longer, and perch and dace as shining as silver. But alas! what could the finest fish in the universe do to console us for the good hats and shirts, and shoes and hose, that were gone into some thief's bag? What a pretty set of simpletons did we seem. How were we to get home, like a little drove of naked savages? We had not one of us a complete suit of clothes, no, nor half a suit; and the only resource was a good half-hour's sit down on the grass, and crying over our condition. But at length, some one collecting a little reason, proposed to equip a messenger, with a contribution of vestments from

those that were left, and send him to give notice of our misfortune. This, however, only opened a soror wound than ever, for then came the strong conviction of the anger of our relatives, and the scoldings, and thrashings,—for to the parents of such poor lads as Cris Newton, Joe Garner, and Checkey, a suit of clothes was no trifle. At this idea another general crying ensued; but it was of no use. Night was coming on, the air began to grow cold, and go we must. We therefore put on such odd things as happened to belong to us. One comparatively happy fellow had a shirt; another, a pair of trousers; a third, a jacket; and another, a pair of stockings, or perhaps an odd one, or a pair of shoes only.

I shall never forget the wretched figure we cut, and the wretched faces we had—all red and smeared with tears, that we had nothing wherewithal to wipe away—as we set out on our homeward road. We were truly a weeping and self-accusing company, and full of fears of what was to follow. But when we drew near the Fall, and our apprehensions were growing awful, what did we behold? Truly, nothing less than the assembled household, all at the door watching for us, and all in one great roar of laughter! The old gentleman was sitting in a chair placed for him on the lawn, and was laughing till tears ran down his cheeks. My grandmother was obliged to hold her sides; and the great Buck Tailor, as we called him, the man with the flat nose that I have told you of in a former chapter, stood in the midst and laughed louder than all! Well, at the sight of this, we all shrunk together of a heap, and began crying faster than ever; but the more we cried, the more they at the house-door laughed, till the shrewdest of us began to suspect the truth, that it was a joke of somebody! And so it proved; for presently, the tailor went

into the house, and came out with jackets and trousers, and hats and hose, hanging like a trophy, on a broom ; and then they laughed again, and then we gave over crying and began to laugh too. It was an odd scene for about a minute. For in the excess and revulsion of our feelings we still stood all together, and looked at one another; and for one moment we were silent, and then for a moment we all laughed together again with tears on our faces ; and then as suddenly stopped, and then laughed again, till the tailor reached us with his trophy, and another man came after him, bringing the rest of our clothes ; and we soon sorted them out, and slipped into them in very quick time.

The tailor had played us the joke. He had passed in the midst of our fishing, and seeing us too intently occupied to notice anything else, gathered up our clothes and took them to the Fall, where they all entered into the jest, and waited the event. I will venture to say that no one of the group has forgotten it to this day. But what was odd enough, when our merry friends began to say—"Where is the fish ? What have you done with your fish ? Have you lost your clothes, and your fish, and your senses together?" it was found that, in our grief for the loss of our clothes, we had left the fish behind us, and it might have been stolen too.

Well, I think that was an adventnre, now. Shall I tell you another?

It was a great delight to us, while at the Fall, to go with the labourers into the fields, and see them at their work ; to go into the hay-field and corn-field, and to see the men ploughing, and the rooks come and settle down in the furrows behind them, to pick up the worms and grubs that were turned up. The cunning rogues ! if a man had a gun in his hand, they would not come within a field of him—country people say they can smell powder—but they don't

care a button for a ploughman ; they know he would not hurt them. But at us they cast some shrewd looks with their black, shining eyes, and their heads turned knowingly on one side.

One day myself and an elder brother had got with a man cutting down some trees, and we were busy enough you may be sure. As he laid down any of his tools we had hold of them in a moment, and began chopping away with them. Now his mattock, now his bill, now his hatchet, were in requisition, and he had commonly to say—"Now, my boys, I want this," and "now, I want that." My brother had got hold of the axe, and was chopping at a bough near the ground, and I was stooping down to look at the part he was chopping, and just saying, "it's nearly off!" when bang went the axe into my skull. Through my cap it went, and seemed to stick fast in my head, with a numbing sensation that was disagreeable enough. "There," said the man, "you've done it now, young master ; you've split your brother's head. By guy ! what will missis say?"—for their mistress, being a spirited woman, always came into their heads first on such occasions—"and what will your father and mother say ? They'll blame me for it, just as if I had done it myself." Thuck ! thuck ! went the old man with his tongue, "but this is a pretty job." "He should take care of his head," said my brother, in that natural anger which is the first feeling when an accident occurs ; "why did he go poking his head just where I was chopping ?" Just as he said this, the man lifted off my cap, and the blood, in a moment, ran down my face, and blinded me. The man clapped on the cap in a consternation, and said in great haste, "Run, run, my dear lad, if you can run, to the house !" And away I ran, and he ran, and my brother ran, now no longer angry at the

accident, but crying as loud as he could that he had killed me.

But it proved no killing matter. My grandmother, who, oddly enough, was fond of dressing a wound, took off my cap, washed away the blood, and said, "O, it is nothing!" and with that she thrust some lint dipped in brandy into the wound, that made me scream, and leap, and spin about on the floor in an agony ten times sharper than that of the axe. The wound in time got well. The old man said I had lost no brains out of it, but, he thought, had got some put in; for he would be bound for me not to put my skull in the way of an axe again. The wound healed, but the scar remains to this day.

As I sat with my head bound up on this occasion, my grandfather said—"I can tell you what happened to me in that very field. I was coursing there, with a couple of capital greyhounds, when we put up a hare which we called the Old Witch, from the number of times we had run her without being able to catch her. She was a remarkable hare; one with a back in appearance almost black at a distance. We could know her in a moment, but our dogs seemed to have no chance with her. She doubled, and turned, and popped through some hedge, and was gone, we never could tell where. We have since suspected that she ran into a drain, or some such place, having discovered that when out of sight she was secure from the greyhounds; and that if we had taken a terrier to the place where we had sprung her, we might soon have discovered the place of her retreat. But, be that as it may, when the dogs had put her up, and she was again about to give them the slip, a beautiful greyhound suddenly leaped the fence in the face of her, turned her, and caught her in a moment. I went up, and did not know which to admire most—the fine old hare,

which had given us so many a chase, so large, so ruddy on her sides, and her back thickly clothed with such a dark and curly fur, or this beautiful dog, certainly the most beautiful I ever beheld. It was so fully, and yet so finely grown; its limbs so well knit, and yet so graceful; it was without spot or dash, as white as snow. It did not really look like a dog of earth, but one dropped out of heaven, or at least out of some ethereal region, just at this critical moment. It was such a dog as one might imagine following the footsteps of Diana, or of the queen of the fairies, or, if of any mortal dame, only of some young, gentle, and pure maiden of princely birth. I looked over the hedge to see with whom it had come; there was nobody, and the dog came and fawned, and smiled—yes, smiled upon me; for it arched its graceful and snowy neck, and laid down its fine silken ears close to its taper head, and its eyes were as smiling as those of any human being. The dog went with me the whole day, and every fresh course only increased my admiration; in every one we had the advantage; not a hare was started but was killed. I brought the beautiful creature home, and every one admired it as much as I did. It stayed with us some weeks; every day I expected to see it advertised, for somebody must have set great value upon it; but I never saw or heard any inquiry after it. It appeared to me sent out of some charmed region for my particular benefit, and was as gentle and affectionate as it was agile and strong.

“ But one evening as it lay on the kitchen hearth basking before the fire, your uncle stooping down to pat it on the head, it made a sudden spring and bit him on the hand. He was surprised, and chastised it, but suspected nothing. Days went on, and no fresh instance of such snappishness occurred, when one of the maids came running in from the

yard, saying that she had seen the dog biting the pigs in the sty, and snapping at the cows in the yard, and she thought he was going mad. When you recollect that it had bitten your uncle, you may be sure we were very much alarmed. We caught it and confined it, and waited with anxiety to see if any effect would follow to itself, or to the pigs or cattle that it had bitten;—and we did not wait long,—the dog became raving mad, and was shot; and soon after, the pigs began to shew symptoms of madness too. They turned sulky and refused to eat; and in a few days there was such a scene as you never saw nor heard of. Eleven pigs, all in one sty, screaming and rearing on their hind legs, and tearing each other with their tusks; it was a fearful, yet ludicrous sight. The query was, how to kill them? the general cry was to shoot them; but who was to shoot? My son had set off to the sea-side, having had the part cut out where he had been bitten, and having undergone the regular course of the then famous Ormskirk medicine. I was too much agitated to attempt to shoot; and the men were better hands at a rake or a fork than a gun. But while we were deliberating, Jack Barks, a tall hardy young labourer, of a singular and daring temperament, and who wore his hair long, hanging on his shoulders like an ancient German, snatched up a clodding-mall, that is, a great mallet with a long handle, used for breaking clods on the summer-fallows, and without a word, entered the sty, amid the rabid host of swine, and knocked them on the head one after another. Never did I see such a sight in my life; and we found that the dog had bitten several horses and cows in the neighbourhood, which were obliged to be shot. I have had a horror of all strange dogs since then, however beautiful they might be; and that field you see, was more unfortunate to me than to you.

Your uncle, however, as you may judge, for there he sits, never received any harm, and so far all was well."

"And your uncle," said my uncle himself, smiling, "can tell you what happened to him with a greyhound not in that very field, but in this very room. When your mother and I were little children of about your present age, your grandmother used to find, as many mothers, I don't doubt, do now-a-days," said he with a sly look, "that we made quite as much noise at times as was agreeable to her nerves, and a little more, I fancy. In fact, we were apt, as our neighbour, old John Beam, at the Wood-end, says, 'to be opstropolous,' or as your grandmother used to say, often and often, 'these children are like going-fires.' Well, to purchase a little quiet now and then, she used to offer a penny to the one that sate still the longest, or a penny a piece if we both sate still for an hour. On one of these trying occasions we were sitting there, where you are sitting now, each on a little cricket, as those very stools you now sit on are called, when in came one of the greyhounds and took up a cold tongue from a side-table, which the servant had the moment before brought in in preparation for luncheon, and made off with it. You may be sure that we were vastly tempted to cry out, but then we should have lost the penny! Your mother was always such a meek quiet little thing to what I was, that she generally carried off the prize; and on this occasion I had determined not to be outdone if I sat all day. Desperate therefore as was the temptation, I screwed up my resolution, and sate firm and still, only looking at your mother, who also looked at me and smiled, but said not a word. Presently in came the maid, and, missing the tongue, cried out, 'What in the world has become of the tongue? Have you been playing some trick, Master Richard? Eh? have

you taken it away to frighten me? I verily believe you have! And where have you put it, eh?" I shook my head, but said nothing. "Miss Phœbe, do you know anything of the tongue?" Miss Phœbe's tongue did not stir. "My word," said the girl, "but I will know, though," and off she went, and in came your grandmother, "Come, come, you have stirred,—you have been off your seats; you have been playing your tricks; you have spoken; it's of no use shaking your heads and pretending;—one or both of you have lost the penny, so let us know all about it this moment." We still persisted in our silence, and still shook our heads. "Well then," said your grandmother, "instead of keeping silence any longer, I'll give a penny to the first who tells me what is become of the tongue." "The greyhound, Cob, took it!" we both shouted at once. "Then, why did you not speak? Then why did you not run out and give the alarm?" "Ay! then we should have lost the prize," said we both together. Your grandmother, who saw that silence had its disadvantages as well as noise sometimes, here could not help laughing heartily; and when your grandfather came in, we were all very merry about it. The dog was found just licking his chaps in the yard over the last bit of the tongue, and it was ever afterwards added as a condition in these trials of silence, that in case of any similar occurrence we were to have the reward for giving the alarm instead of keeping still."

"I remember it; I remember it!" said the old gentleman; so, having given my grandfather's story, and my uncle's story, I shall now give my own story, about that goat that I mentioned, and then good-by to the days at my grandfather's.

"I have seen many a goat in Scotland, in Wales, and in Cornwall, but I never saw such a goat as this,—a most

sturdy, mischievous, and tyrannical rogue. He seems, to my recollection, to have been twice the common size of goats; of strong limbs, and with a head as hard and solid as an anvil. The stable-yard was his proper place, but he determined to be everywhere. He mounted the walls and roofs; now he was in the garden, upsetting glasses and pots, and cropping just everything that he should not; and then he was in the kitchen, butting at the dogs on the hearth; drinking the milk, or capsizing the milk-pails, or rearing up and smelling amongst the crockery in the cupboard with a very unceremonious nose, or browsing on a servant's white apron, or crimped cap, or a frilled shirt, as they dangled on the clothes-horse. He was wherever they did not want him; and wherever he was, he was certainly in mischief. If there was a noise at a distance, it was sure to be the goat; he had got amongst half the boys and dogs in the neighbourhood, fighting, butting, and retreating, and assailing again with unconquerable spirit, or he had got into some man's garden and overturned the beehives, or knocked down the ladder, and broke the window. Women and children were frightened out of their wits at him; and he knew it, and hectored over them, like a bully as he was. As we regarded him as a public enemy, we lads delighted to plague him. The kitchen of my good grandfather smoked, and to prevent this nuisance, it was necessary, when the wind was in a certain quarter, to set open the door; but then, a greater nuisance still would walk in, the goat. So to keep him out, there was a loop of white leather fastened to the latch, which, when hung on the catch, let the door stand open about three inches. Mr. Capricorn would come very officiously poking his nose in through this opening, with a determined attempt to enter. It was a grand joke with us to pop the poker in the fire,

and without making it so hot as to burn him, touch his nose with it, and he would dart off from the door with such precipitance, and such pitiful bleatings—for the goat dreads the very smell of fire—as made us laugh heartily at him.

"But this was not all our fun with him. We used to get one of the men to hold him for us; for if held by the beard, he would be the most pitiful object of cowering humility imaginable, and would bleat, and lick the sides of his mouth, and be your very humble servant. While the man held him, one of us would mount, and then seizing him fast by the horns, apply our heels to his sides, and make him gallop round the lawn at full speed. Many a brave ride have I had on him, and a brave smell did he leave on my clothes for months after—I was as bad as the goat himself in that respect. One day however, myself and Harry Gillet, a lad of the village, saw him coming towards us, as if to repay us for all our sins against him. We were in the stable-yard, and the goat was in the rick-yard. We closed the gate that was between the yards, and having him on the other side, felt quite secure of him, the gate being a remarkably high one. Gillet fetched the wagon-whip out of the stable, and began to give him a taste of it across the gate, when to our astonishment, over he sprang at once. We flew into the stable; and I, luckily or cunningly, turned into the corner just by the door as I entered, but Gillet ran up to the manger, thinking to climb into the hay-rack; but the goat was too nimble for him, and caught him between his horns and the manger, butting him against it with his hard sledge-hammer head, with such force as made him cry out lustily, and put even his life in jeopardy. As the goat had run in, I had run out, and given the alarm to some one who came to his rescue, but not before the goat punished him for all his insults to him.

In future we kept at a safer distance from him; and he, in fact, became the terror of the whole neighbourhood.

“ He would, every now and then, make his appearance in the village; and the moment he was seen, every soul got into his house and every door was closed. He was the tyrant of the street. He stalked up and down, and looked about for any possible chance of doing mischief. He fought the dogs; he chased the hens; he attacked every man, woman, or child that appeared. I remember him coming one day suddenly into the village. At the sight of him everybody ran into their houses, except an old woman, whom in a moment he knocked down and took his stand upon. The poor old creature cried out loudly for help, but no help appeared. All cried, ‘ Help her! help her! she’ll be killed! ’ But no one had himself the courage to assail such an enemy. At length a baker, a good-natured fellow, a funny fellow, a fellow of infinite wit and merriment, plucked up chivalry enough to encounter him. He came forth with a great pole, and rushing at the goat, hit him a blow on the head that would have broken any skull but such as stood on that vagabond’s shoulders. It had no more effect upon him than to make him take a great leap and butt at the baker, which sent him to the ground on his back, and made his rantipole fly some yards from him. The goat now took his stand on the baker, and was the unquestioned conqueror and tyrant of the place. The baker now, in his turn, cried for help ten times louder than the old woman, who had gathered up her crazy limbs, and, with many a wild glance sent backwards from time to time, and many a groan both of pain and fear, made her escape into the blacksmith’s shop. The baker cried for help, and there were plenty to hear but none to rescue him. Who would tempt his fate? The very baker that cried for

help was a living warning against such rashness. It was for some time a very nice question what was to be the end of it. The blacksmith wished he had his great hammer at his head, but he never offered to take it there. Poor old Hannah Sales, the old dame who had escaped, kept crying, 'For God's sake help the poor man; he has saved my life, and now he'll be killed himself. Won't you help him?'

"'Why help him yourself,' said the blacksmith, 'if you like it, Mrs. Sales; my life is as dear to me as another man's.' The barber wished he had his razor at his throat, and the tailor lifted up his sleeveboard with both hands, with a menacing air, but never stirred a step. One neighbour called to another, 'Do you turn out, Thomas, and I will; the man must not be killed.' But not a door opened, and the poor baker began to groan piteously over his fate; when, just as a shopkeeper had taken down an old rusty gun, and charged it with a pipehead full of gunpowder and some good duck-shot, and laid it on the lower half of his shop-door; and was taking a long aim, and would speedily have perilled the life of the goat, or the man, or both of them;—just as he was going to fire, and would certainly have fired had he not been frightened at his own daring, there came a man up from the Fall, in search of the intruder. He marched up to him, and seizing him by the beard, the swaggering conqueror suddenly was converted into a trembling and cowering slave; and was led away making the most submissive bleatings."

This was the last hostile appearance of the goat in the streets of the village. My good grandfather was threatened with legal proceedings if he did not remove the terror of the country; and the goat was condemned and executed.

Such was the history of this turbulent goat; and if any one think that I deserved some punishment for my teasing

him, let him have the satisfaction of knowing that the goat exacted retributive justice upon me after his death.

"After his death?" I hear you say; "why, did the ghost of the goat appear to you?" "No; but his head was set up between the forked branches of a pear-tree; and there happening to see it, more than a year afterwards, I attempted to take it down. I held it by the horns, and was thinking over all our old freaks, and how I used to hold by these same horns when he was alive, and gallop him round the field, when the head slipped out of the outer shell of the horns, and fell upon my foot with such force as lamed me for some weeks."

And so here ends the days at my grandfather's. Like all pleasant days they soon hurried by. My good old grandfather has long been dead; his son, an old grey-headed man, is now dead too; the rook-wood is cut down; the rabbit-warren is destroyed;—since I began to write this history, the old house has passed from the family it had sheltered so long; and the days at my grandfather's are but a name and a memory!





CHAPTER XI.

FIRESIDE AMUSEMENTS.

Not the least pleasant was the time we used to spend on winter evenings round the fire. In that quiet old-fashioned village, we had no grand parties, nor grand folk either; but we had pleasant, simple-hearted neighbours, who frequently came in to sit and chat over the news, and old stories of the neighbourhood. Sometimes we had a number of young people to pass the evening, and then we had a large old room to ourselves to romp and play in, and there we were merry enough over blind-man's buff, turn-trencher, hunt-the-slipper, forfeits, I-spy, and all such

frolicking and capering sports. On more sober evenings, we played at drafts, dominoes, fox-and-goose, jack-straws, and such simple games. Jack-straws was a great game with us; and if there be any lads that do not happen to know what they are, I shall briefly explain them here, because any lad can, at any time, make them for himself. The jack-straws are a number of straws cut to about three inches long each, or what is better as far more enduring, as many splinters of deal of the same length, and about of the thickness of straws, or rather thinner, because they are solid. A lad with his knife may, in a very short time, split off from a thin bit of deal, fifty or sixty of these, with three or four of twice the length, rounded, and at one end gradually brought to a point, something in the manner of a wooden skewer, only thinner. Three or four, or more children may then play at jack-straws, thus:—Let one of the company take up all the jack-straws, in a neat little sheaf in his hand, and holding them about nine or ten inches above the table, let them suddenly fall perpendicularly upon it. They will fall in a tangled heap, and the fun is for each one in turn to remove a jack-straw from the heap without moving the rest in the slightest degree. Of course it is easy enough at first, because, more or less of them will be quite apart, and disconnected from the heap; but as you proceed, the difficulty increases every moment, and a good deal of skill is required to remove some of the jack-straws, which can only be done by putting the point of the skewer, or pointer under one, and lifting it off from the rest by a clever jerk, which no doubt gave the original name of jerk-straws, now corrupted to jack-straws, to the game. It seems a sport invented by the shepherds, to while away the time as they lay on the downs on summer days. He wins, who at the end of the game, which

is the entire removal of the heap, has the greatest number of jack-straws. Any jack-straws removed by a jerk which shakes some of the others, must be thrown upon the heap again. There are some different modes of playing at jack-straws, but this we found the most fair, and the most agreeable. Some, instead of taking away each one jack-straw in turn, permit each one in his turn to abstract as many as he can, without shaking the rest; but this gives a good player who gets the first turn, a very decided chance of winning, and often keeps the other players waiting a long time. However, all these laws of the game are subject to the fancy and agreement of those who play, and sometimes one, sometimes the other, may be tried for variety. A king, a queen, a bishop, and other characters, may also be made by dipping the two ends of a jack-straw in sealing-wax for the king, one end for the queen, and one end of one in ink for the bishop, which may count four, three, two, or any number agreed upon.*

On other evenings, my father or mother used to read to us some interesting book. I wonder how many times we had Robinson Crusoe and Pilgrim's Progress read over by that fireside! What volumes of travels and poetry! but there were no evenings that we enjoyed more than those in which one or more of the old neighbours came in, and many a story and anecdote of the neighbourhood were talked over. There was my grandfather from the Fall, old William Woolley, or old Samuel Hand, or there was Dr. Dally, or Cousin John, or some one else.

Old Mr. Hand was a gentlemen of small fortune, who

* These are now sold in the shops, and are called "spillikins," but are, both in themselves and the rules for playing, inferior to what are here described.

lived in the village, and must have been an oddity in his way, for I remember he used to wear a spencer, or sort of jacket over his coat, instead of a great coat, and a pair of pattens like a woman, to keep his feet dry; but a more simple, good-hearted creature never existed. He was ready to lend a hand on any occasion when it seemed wanting, even to rocking the cradle or nursing a child. He believed everything that was told him with the most profound good faith, and continually testified his surprise by exclaiming—"Lord bless me! Lord bless me!" or when vexed—"Lord bless me, and save me, and grant me patience!" The most mischievous joke he was ever known to play off, was upon an old woman, who had left her spinning-wheel at the door while she went a gossiping a little. Happening to come past at that moment, he dropped a handful of halfpence into a tin which the old dame had set upon her wheel with water in it, in which occasionally to dip her fingers, so as better to twist her thread; and he stood at our window to witness her surprise on her return; which surprise, to his high delight, was great enough; the old woman being seen hurrying off in a fright at the discovery, to call all her neighbours together to see the wonderful thing, which they unanimously agreed had been done by the fairies, to the old man's most happy amusement.

Dr. Dally was a different sort of person: a tall, melancholy gentleman, who made his appearance now and then from a distance; seemed to have a strong religious impression upon him; told marvellous stories of providences and divine interpositions; and had the odd habits of suddenly starting up in the midst of a cheerful conversation, and going away, and of bringing live snakes out of the fields with him, curled round his arm, or coiled in his bosom, which he deposited in an empty cheese-vat, with some

bran, where they seemed to lie without the least attempt to escape out of the vat, though nothing was easier, the edge of it not being more than three inches high. At times, however, he went into the opposite extreme of merriment, and was fond of surprising us by feats of legerdemain, and by scientific experiments.

Cousin John was also an eccentric, of whom I shall have occasion to speak presently. He was an old bachelor, who cultivated a few acres of his own, kept three or four cows, and was very knowing in parish business. He walked with a bold, free step, as though he cared for nobody, and had a very good opinion of himself. He entered your house with a very free manner, and was always announced by his own loud voice, that was heard before he was seen. "Well, cousin, and how are you to-day, and how are the young ones?" and then down be sate, and talked as loud, and laughed as loud at his own wit, as possible. He was a man that said he hated all sorts of nonsense, and yet he talked a good deal too, at times. But with all his oddities, he had a vast deal of good-nature, and when any one was in trouble, he was the first to offer any assistance that he could give; and I have seen him watching and nursing once, when my father was ill, day and night, in such a manner, and with such real tenderness, that it seemed wonderful to me, after his usual rough, abrupt manner. If you wanted some one to undertake any important business, or to undertake a good office, he was the man thought of in a moment. "O! Cousin John will do it, gladly, I am sure!" And I have seen him, when my mother has gone, and found him busy digging in his garden, as though he had not a minute to spare, keep digging on while she has been talking to him; but when she has told him of some good Samaritan act that she wished him to undertake,

shake his head, and say, turning over a spadeful of earth very diligently—"Why now, is there no idle body nowhere to be found for such a thing, eh, cousin?" and then scraping his shoes on his spade, even while the words were on his tongue, he has added—"Well, I suppose it's I that must do it, cousin, after all!" And away he has gone with all the zeal and eagerness of a lad, and done all that was desired of him.

Many a long evening have I sat and heard these worthy folks talking over their village topics, or contested a game of fox-and-geese with one or other of them; and many a time as my little brother Claude and I have sate listening to them, they have said, "Well, is there nothing that we can talk of to amuse these youngsters, that are sitting so good here? we should not keep all the talk to ourselves;" and then, perhaps, my mother would repeat us a piece of poetry. One such evening she repeated us the following :—

THE WIND IN A FROLIC.

The wind one morning sprung up from sleep,
Saying, "Now for a frolic! now for a leap!
Now for a mad-cap, galloping chase!
I'll make a commotion in every place!"
So it swept with a bustle right through a great town,
Creaking the signs, and scattering down
Shutters; and whisking, with merciless squalls,
Old women's bonnets and gingerbread stalls.
There never was heard a much lustier shout,
As the apples and oranges trundled about;
And the urchins, that stand with their thievish eyes
For ever on watch, ran off each with a prize.

Then away to the field it went blustering and humming,
And the cattle all wondered whatever was coming.

It plucked by their tails the grave, matronly cows,
And tossed the colts' manes all about their brows,
Till, offended at such a familiar salute,
They all turned their backs, and stood sullenly mute.
So on it went, capering and playing its pranks ;
Whistling with reeds on the broad river's banks ;
Puffing the birds as they sate on the spray,
Or the traveller grave on the king's highway.
It was not too nice to hustle the bags
Of the beggar, and flutter his dirty rags :
'T was so bold, that it feared not to play its joke
With the doctor's wig, or the gentleman's cloak.
Through the forest it roared, and cried gaily, " Now,
You sturdy old oaks, I'll make you bow !"
And it made them bow without more ado,
Or it cracked their great branches through and through.

Then it rushed like a monster on cottage and farm,
Striking their dwellers with sudden alarm ;
And they ran out like bees in a Midsummer swarm.
There were dames with their 'kerchiefs tied over their caps,
To see if their poultry were free from mishaps ;
The turkeys they gobbled, the geese screamed aloud,
And the hens crept to roost in a terrified crowd :
There was rearing of ladders, and logs laying on
Where the thatch from the roof threatened soon to be gone.

But the wind had passed on, and had met in a lane,
With a schoolboy, who panted and struggled in vain ;
For it tossed him, and twirled him, then passed, and he stood,
With his hat in a pool, and his shoe in the mud.

There was a poor man, hoary and old,
Cutting the heath on the open wold.
The strokes of his bill were faint and few,
Ere this frolicsome wind upon him blew :

But behind him, before him, about him it came,
And the breath seemed gone from his feeble frame;
So he sate him down with a muttering tone,
Saying, "Plague on the wind! was the like ever known?
But now-a-days every wind that blows
Tells one how weak an old man grows!"

But away went the wind in its holiday glee,
And now it was far on the billowy sea,
And the lordly ships felt its staggering blow,
And the little boats darted to and fro.
But lo! it was night, and it sank to rest,
On the sea-bird's rock, in the gleaming west,
Laughing to think, in its fearful fun,
How little of mischief it had done!



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CHAPTER XII.

ALL were highly delighted with the verses on the Wind in a Frolic; the old quite as much as the young; and even Cousin John would have them repeated a second time. That having been done, my father was called upon for a story, and proceeded to relate to us the adventures of a dog.

SEEKING A FORTUNE.

BEFORE the fire of an old-fashioned kitchen, in which nothing was heard but the drowsy ticking of an ancient yellow-faced clock and the merry songs of a dozen crickets, sate, wide awake and exceedingly restless, a fine, large, shaggy dog, although it was midnight. One would have wondered what could ail him; for he sate erect, fixing



his eyes on the glimmering flame with a most wo-begone look; and, every now and then, giving a low whine, he rose and walked to and fro uneasily, and then came back to the spot on the hearth, and fixed his gaze on the fire as before. But if we could have known his thoughts we should have ceased to wonder; they were running through his head much after this manner: "A good master have I lost, and a bad mistress have I got. Who could have thought it! A thousand times did she use to say that she loved me for my master's sake. A thousand times has she patted my head, and given me new milk to my breakfast; and when my good old master smiled, and said, 'Love me, love my dog!' she replied, 'that is a good proverb, let who would first hit on it.' But my master is dead, and this same loving woman has coaxed him to leave her all he had, and now—I could bite her by the leg for vexation—what do I get but kicks and blows? And if I ever receive a bone, it is flung at my head with these words, 'Out, idle good-for-nothing, as thou art! Were it not for thy poor master's sake, I would knock out thy silly brains with the broom.' It signifies not; I can bear it no longer; every bit of her food that I eat seems as though it would choke me. It is better to be dead than to be where one is not wanted; so I have made up my mind—I will out and seek my fortune."

Having made this resolution, honest Rover lay suddenly down with a great sigh, which seemed to send all his trouble out of his heart, and slept like a top till the morning. The moment the door was opened, he hurried briskly out and was off. For a moment he bounded on lightly, as if escaped from a prison; but when he turned to give a last look at the house where his dear master had lived, and where he had lived so happily, his tail dropped, he hung

his head; sadness oppressed his heart; and he felt like a criminal and a runaway. But, at the very first recollection of what he had lately suffered, he pricked up his tail and ears, marched on with a proud step, and thought to himself, "Come what will, there can't be a worse place in the world than this is now."

Alas! poor rogue, he was terribly mistaken. The next minute, he saw a boy who was driving his hoop along the street towards him, and shouted as he came, "Out of the way, you scoundrel dog, will you stop the hoop?" The hoop seemed far enough out of his way, but, as if in utter perversity, it suddenly wheeled aside, ran against him, and fell. "Take that for your pains, you stupid cur," said the lad; at the same time striking him with all his might on the head with his truncheon. Rover gave a short howl of pain and astonishment, and sprung forward in affright. "A wicked lad is that," he thought to himself, "and he will, doubtless, come to a bad end." The fact was, Rover had only seen the world as those in prosperity see it;—he had only gone out before with his master. He was now to look a little on the dark side; and in less than five minutes he saw a cloud of dust fill the street before him, and immediately discovered that it arose from a flock of sheep which wedged the way completely up, and came panting in their heavy hot fleeces, with a dog barking, and a man clamouring behind them. Alas, poor Rover! he had chosen the most unlucky day in the week for his departure;—it was market morning, and he might have known, had he known anything of the world, that the road would for miles be full of all sorts of people and impediments.

Whilst he stood looking on this side and on that side, to discover some possibility of passing, a great sheep suddenly sprung out of the flock, butted him down, and leaping with

a great bound over him, was followed by the rest, till they fairly ran over him in a mass; and left him struggling, dirty, and half bruised to death on the ground. "A wiseacre of a dog it must needs be," said the man, with a great grin, while Rover with difficulty rose, shook himself, and trotted on. But his troubles came thickly upon him; a coach, with smoking horses, clustered with passengers, like bees, and top-heavy with packages, came thundering along the street. Crack went the coachman's whip, and Rover, feeling a cut across his back, as if he had been stung through and through, howled out in agony, and was answered by the laughter of the whole crew of passengers.

In terror, astonishment, and cruel sorrow of heart, he flew forward. The world seemed to him to have become all at once perfectly fiendish, and he was half inclined to retrace his steps, and his mistress began to assume in his fancy the nature of an angel,—but pride got the mastery of him, and he went on. I am sorry to say, however, with no better prospects. Wherever he came, the dogs, who in his master's days came wagging their tails, and begging the honour of his acquaintance, now rushed barking from all quarters upon him, and it was only by the merit of his heels that he escaped being torn to pieces. Our father Adam could not be more astonished at the sudden ferocity which came upon the beasts at the Fall, than Rover was at that of his fellow-dogs. He did not know that dogs, like some superior animals, have an instantaneous perception of misfortune, and are the most ungracious things in the world to the weak and defenceless. When he glanced forward too, the whole way was full of men, women, cattle, and carts. It was of no use to attempt to keep the highway; he therefore slipped through a hedge into a field. Here a flock of sheep, quietly

grazing, no sooner saw him than they scampered away, shaking their heavy fleeces, and collected in a distant part of the field, in the utmost alarm. "A dog is worrying my sheep, I declare," exclaimed the farmer, who happened to be looking out of the window; and taking down his gun, he sallied forth to shoot him. Fortunately, he had lived so long on the fat of the land, that he was neither the lightest nor the fleetest man in the parish, so that by the time he had crossed the field Rover had cleared three. Nevertheless, Rover, finding hedges and ditches very troublesome, again ventured into the main road, and rejoiced to discover that it was now nearly clear of passengers; he therefore travelled along pretty tolerably, taking the precaution, whenever he saw any one approaching, to pop through the hedge into a field.

A long way he must have gone that day; and towards evening he began to feel tired, foot-sore, and dejected. In this condition he espied a house—a very, very little house it was; and, as with a beating heart he ventured near it, he saw nobody but a poor old woman—a very, very poor old woman she seemed; for her house was not more than three yards square. It had neither chamber, nor cellar, nor any other room besides; and her bed and everything she had in the world, were in it. As she saw the poor forlorn dog approach with a woful face, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, and his eye asking relief, "Ah, poor dumb creature!" she said, "the world goes as badly with thee as with me; I must even take pity on thee." She set him a basin of buttermilk before the door, and stood with her stick to keep back her great black cat, which, with a tail like that of a fox, and eyes flaming with green fire, stood in the window, growling, and threatening every moment to fly upon him. "There!" said the dame, the

instant that he had lapped up the buttermilk, "begone with thee; 'tis all I can do for thee, and thou frightenest Madge out of her seven senses. Off with thee, I say!" He gave a grateful wag of his tail, and trudged on.

It was now evening, and he would fain indeed have begged a night's lodging of the old woman, if the cat would have agreed to it; but as he saw she would not, he turned off towards a distant wood, where he found a hollow tree, and creeping into the leaves which had drifted there, in spite of all his troubles, and in spite of all his recollections of his usual snug lodgings on the kitchen hearth, with the sound of the old yellow-faced clock and the songs of the crickets in his ears, he soon fell asleep. What was his surprised on waking, to see another dog strutting and wagging his tail at the entrance of the hole. It was a fine night—a fine moonshiny night; and as the dog seemed to be friendly, he got up, and smiling and wagging his tail he approached him.

"Was the like ever seen?" said a voice close by; "if he is not the very picture of our Snap!" He looked round, and saw two men, who glanced at him, and then looked suspiciously about, as if fearful of surprise. They were poachers. Seeing that Rover was willing to follow them, they went home, talking as they went, how exactly the dog was like their own, and adding, that if he was only half as good, he was worth his weight in gold.

A lawless life truly, our Rover had now fallen into; and to his shame be it said, he liked it. All day he was confined with his companion, under the stairs of the cottage of one of the poachers; but every night it was the grandest sport to range through woods, heaths, and fields, driving the game into his masters' nets. But one day he heard a strange bustle in the house; strange faces looked under

the stairs, and being called, out he came, and saw his master in the custody of several as rough-looking fellows as himself. To mend the matter, he heard them talk of hanging the dogs; so, watching his opportunity, he slipped out of the house, and made the best of his way. Often enough, you may be sure, he looked behind him to see if he were pursued; but finding that was not the case, he slackened his trot, and in a while found himself upon the open downs. He looked here and there, and saw various flocks of sheep, and their shepherds with them, and he kept cautiously at a distance, lest they might be afraid of him as a strange wandering dog, disturbing their sheep, and so might set their curs upon him. But coming suddenly over a little eminence that faced the south, there he saw a boy sitting just by him, with his flock at a distance from the others. Rover would have retreated unobserved, but the lad saw him in a moment; and jumping up from the stone on which he was sitting, cried, "here, my lad, here!" at the same time clapping his hand on his thigh in an inviting manner, and whistling to him. As the lad was an honest-looking lad, Rover took heart and drew near him. The lad seemed very glad to see him, clapped him on the head, coaxed him, and said, "Well, my old fellow, and who are you? and where do you come from? and where are you going, eh! old fellow? You are just the man for me: will you be my dog, eh?" To all which Rover replied by wagging his tail and looking very well pleased. So there he stayed. The boy gave him some bread out of his bag, and seemed never tired of playing with him, and talking to him, asking him a thousand questions, as whether he had run away from his master? or whether he had lost him? whether he could tend sheep? and what was his name? To which all Rover's answers

were again nothing but tail-wags. But when the lad had run over all the dog's names that he knew, as Dash and Rush, Keeper and Cæsar, Lightfoot and Bobtail, and at last hit upon that of Rover, Rover pricked up his ears, and looked so intelligent that the lad knew he had found out his real name. "O ! and so you are Rover, are you ? And that's the reason you are roving about, I suppose." And the lad was very merry, and played with Rover all his spare time that day, rolling down the hills with him, and running full speed up them again ; and then trying Rover's abilities as a sheep-dog, which he found very promising ; for although he did not understand the particular language of the shepherds to their dogs, he caught the meaning of the lad's eye, and tones, and gestures ; so that the lad was very much pleased with Rover indeed, and thought he had found a great prize. When he had penned his fold in the evening, he ran home with nimble steps to shew his new-found companion to his father and mother. The old people lived in a village about a mile off, down in one of those sweet woody valleys that run through the southern downs ; a beautiful valley it was, watered with a swift, shallow, and delightful stream, with green meadows and rustic cottages scattered about it. Ben, the shepherd boy, ran into his parents' cottage saying, " See what I have got ! See, this dog came to me in the downs, and has stayed with me all day ! "

Ben's father was an old shepherd, whose limbs were grown stiff with rheumatism, caught by being so often wet while out with his sheep ; and he was now glad to let Ben take his place as often as he could. His old dog was like himself, grown almost superannuated, and would not go out with anybody but himself ; and while he stayed at home, which was now almost constantly, would lie under

his chair, or in the sunshine at the door ; and, like the old man, was grown a little crabbed with age and infirmities. It was, therefore, pretty much in the same manner that Ben's dog was received by the old shepherd and his dog. No sooner had Ben in his joy said, " See what I have got ! " than the old man said, " What have you got, eh lad ? " and the old dog rushed from under the old man's chair, and flew at Rover like a fury. A great gaunt, grey beast he was, and his eyes glared like fire, and in a second he had Rover on the floor, and seemed as though he would tear him to pieces in a moment. Rover howled, Ben cried, the old man came with his staff, and laying on both of the scuffling dogs with all his might, made the old dog let go his hold ; and Rover ran out of the house, and down the valley in full speed. This was but a poor reception : the old man scolded, Ben cried, and his mother, who was much younger than his father, and much more good-natured, endeavoured to soothe Ben. But Ben soon ran out of the house, and after his dog, and after a long chase coming up with him, brought him back in a string, and tied him up in the shed behind the house. The old man seeing that Ben was very fond of the dog, and soon after going out on the downs, and seeing that he really was very useful to the lad, grew reconciled to him ; though he always pretended to despise the dog as no real sheep-dog ; and never would allow him to come into the house to disturb, as he said, the old dog on his own hearth.

Never was there a happier lad now than Ben, or a happier dog than Rover. All that spring and summer they went to the downs together. In the fine mornings, they went tripping on together through the dews, let the sheep out of the fold, and followed them along the green hill sides with never-tiring contentment through the long days.

Sometimes they drew near the other shepherds, and though the shepherds affected to jeer Ben about shepherding with a spaniel, Ben shewed them that Rover could keep the flock together as well as the best of their boasted dogs, and could play a hundred droll tricks besides. For Ben delighted to teach him to fetch and carry ; to sit up and beg ; to wait with a little pebble on his nose till he counted ten, and then chuck it up and catch it again. There was not a stone to be found, but if Ben would just rub it in his hand, and then allow any of the shepherds to throw it with all his might, ay, even in the dark, Rover would fetch the identical stone again, though sometimes it cost him a good long search. He even taught him to sit with his paws on a piece of paper, and pretend to read it aloud, looking over it as gravely, from top to bottom, as a man would actually read it.* As the summer days came on, it was very pleasant to sit on the short green turf, amidst the scattered daisies and yellow buttercups, and purple orchises, while the flock rested, and practise all sorts of solitary fancies. Sometimes Rover gathered up all the pebbles at Ben's bidding, all around, while he laid them out in gardens, or built them up into cottages and steeples. Sometimes Ben cut out the turf in great letters ; sometimes he leaped about, while Rover stood and watched him with a very wise look ; and sometimes Ben rolled the great pebbles far down the hills, and Rover scampered after them, and endeavoured to drag them up again. At times, some of the other boys of the village came and joined them, and then it was a merry time ; and often, in summer, they contrived to lead the flock down the river side, and both lad

* This was once done by a shepherd boy in France, which attracted so much notice that the boy was sent for to court, to exhibit his dog's cleverness before the king and queen.

and dog found pleasure enough in walking into the stream ; Ben hunting after trout under the green banks, and Rover keeping close after him, and watching him as closely as if he knew what he was about.

So went on the summer. The time never seemed wearisome. Sometimes Ben would lead the sheep up to the very highest back of the downs, whence the sea could be seen, and sit down and look out at it for a great while, and say "Isn't that grand, Rover, my boy?" And Rover assented to it, as if he knew all about it. And at other times, Ben would sit on a green slope, and sing and shout by the hour, at the very top of his voice, as if it were the greatest imaginable delight to him to feel the fresh air, and see the green earth, and enjoy the profound solitude, with nothing but the sound of his own voice to fill it.

Ben never seemed weary. At evening, after the flock was folded, and he was got home, he was helping his mother in the garden, for his father could not garden, on account of his rheumatism. He chopped sticks for her, or he went to the shop for flour or groceries, or he fetched water from the brook. Never was there a lad that was so fond of his mother, and his mother was as fond of him, and took good care of Rover because Ben liked him.

But now the year began to draw to a close ; the days grew cold and dreary, and the ground damp. There was no longer any sitting on the green turf, amongst the flowers, and playing and rolling about. The flowers were gone, and rains and storms were come in their stead. Ben put on his thick, old-fashioned drab coat over his white slop, and changed his straw hat for a good rough felt one ; and it was necessary to be always on foot following the flock, both to find the sheep sufficient pasture and to keep themselves warm. Now there came fierce, dashing tempests

of wind and rain out of the boisterous west; and now thick driving mists, that hid everything. On the open down there was no place of shelter, scarcely a tree to run to, and many a wetting they got; and many a weary hour they had to watch and wait in their comfortless condition, wishing that the sun would pop down over the western ridges, and send them home to warmth and comfort. In winter things only grew worse. The days were shorter it is true; but when the snow did not cover the ground entirely, and the sheep were obliged to be driven to the turnip-fields, out Ben and his dog must be, amid cold, rain, and sleet, and winds so sharp that they seemed to blow through them, and made Ben thrust his red hands into his coat bosom, and hop about in very excess of cold, and Rover cower his tail, and look up and whine wistfully in his master's face.

It was about the middle of winter that Ben became very hoarse, and seemed to have caught a dreadful cold with these wettings and exposures. He complained to his mother at night that his back ached, and said, with a smile, that he had often wondered what old men meant when they talked of their backs aching; but that he knew now, and he believed he felt like an old man, for his legs also seemed as though they would not carry him up the hills. He sate cowering over the fire at night; and though his mother made him warm gruel to his supper, it seemed to do him no good. In a morning when he got up, he staggered, and was obliged to hold himself by the wall as he came down stairs, saying that the place seemed to turn round with him; at last he fairly fell a-crying, because he said he was sure he never should be able to go out to the flock. The old man said—"Faw! faw! see, wife, what comes of coddling children now-a-days. I never was coddled in that way, and I never took any harm. A

shepherd is worth nothing at all till he has been properly seasoned." Poor Ben made an effort, and so set off, with tears on his face as he went, and cheeks looking more blooming, and eyes more bright than ever; while his mother looked after him, with tears in her eyes too, saying she was sure the poor lad was dreadfully ill.

All that day Ben stayed out, going after the sheep as if he was like a man in a dream. His eyes were open, and his legs moved; but he was obliged every now and then to sit down to rest himself on a stone; and he had not a word to say to Rover, who followed him silently, as if he knew something was wrong, and when he sate down came and thrust his nose under Ben's hand, who gently tapped his head, and once or twice burst out a-crying. At night, when he got home, his cough was violent and continual; he crept off to bed without waiting for any supper, and his mother came down stairs, saying that he burnt like a fire itself, and ran off for the doctor. Poor Ben! it was all over with his shepherding. The doctor said if he saved his life that would be all. The old man was obliged to take his post again; and Ben, though he got through the fever, sate all winter wrapped up by the fire like a skeleton, his cough seeming as though it would tear him to pieces, and his plump round rosy cheeks sunk away into the thinnest and palest possible. Ben's mother nursed him as a fond mother may be supposed to nurse her only child; and even the old man, though he had a cold winter's work out of doors, with all his stiffness and cramping pains, was mightily softened down when he saw poor Ben's pale face and large glistening eyes; and his limbs, so sturdy awhile ago, now shrunk away to mere feeble sticks, as it were.

Towards spring the old man said, "Please God, Ben, that fine weather would come, and then I think thou

wouldst *barnish*," *i. e.* burnish or recruit again. But the fine weather came, and Ben only seemed to melt away like the snow in the sunshine. Tears often came into his eyes as he patted Rover's head, and he would say: "It is all over, Rover lad, we shall never get upon the downs again." His mother brought him snowdrops and violets; and Ben looking at them, and smelling at them very attentively, said, "They'll just be in time to lay in my coffin, mother." He was right; as his mother but three or four days after was reading to him in the Bible, she looked at him as he sate in his chair with his head laid on a pillow on the chair-arm, and Ben was gone!



Poor Rover! that was no longer the place for him. He kept looking about for Ben. Sometimes he ran up stairs; and then came down, and went to the chair where Ben used to sit, and whined and looked very unhappy; and at length, as if he comprehended that Ben was no longer to be found there, and as if he could no longer bear the place without him, he wandered off again.

The very same day, while passing a large green where a

good many boys were playing—"See, what a handsome dog!" cried one; "Let's catch him," said another,—and, in an instant, they all surrounded him, stretching out their arms to form a sort of chain, and speaking coaxingly to him. Then one boy sprang forward and seized him, on which they tied a handkerchief round his neck, and led him away in triumph.

"Boys," said a tall, bony, consequential man, in a most grave and formal tone, as he stepped over a stile—the schoolmaster, in fact—"boys, what have you got there?" "A dog, sir!" said they all at once, looking sadly cast down. "A dog! and pray how did you come by him?" "We found him, sir." "Found him, O! found him before he was lost, no doubt. Pray what traveller, what esquire, what clergyman, what magistrate, or in short, what gentleman have you deprived of his faithful four-footed friend and companion—for it is evidently the dog of a gentleman—and thereby brought yourselves into jeopardy of a gaol, and me into loss of my character for instilling good principles into my scholars? Take him to your mistress, and bid her tie him up till I come." With silent steps and woful countenances they obeyed. "And what are you bringing now?" said the dame, as they came to the door. "Our master desires you to tie up this dog till he comes." "Out upon ye! out upon ye! a dog, a dog! Haven't I enough dirt made by you, without a dog to run in and out on rainy days, and snatch the children's bread and butter out of their hands to boot?" "Dame," said the voice of the dominie himself, "tie up the dog I say!" and she tied him up.

The next day, Rover was to be seen tied, with a red quill-string, to the board which was put across the doorway to keep the little children from running out of school, that he might get a little air and sunshine; and he had

not been there long, when the voice of farmer Hodgson was heard hallooing out, “ Hazeldine ! Hazeldine ! I say, what dog have you got there ? ” And the dominie, putting out his head, answered, “ A strange dog that hath lost his way, and chosen to stop with us.”

“ Chosen to stop with you, do you say, eh ? Very good, and so you tether him to the door-board ? But as to that never mind—what will you take for him ? It is just the thing I want.” “ Well, master Hodgson, I would fain—” “ Come, no nonsense,” said the farmer, “ here is the money, give me the string, and there’s an end to it.”

The dominie put the end of the cord into the farmer’s hand, and the five shillings into his own pocket, and turning into the school, instead of giving the boys the money, he cried, “ Silence ! silence ! ” and calling up three or four of them, gave each four strokes on the hand with a ferula for making a noise when his back was turned. A strange sense of injustice was struggling in the little fellows’ hearts ; but it was Hazledine’s way of instilling good principles ; so they were obliged to shed a few tears in silence, and submit.

To use a common expression, our dog now lived in clover. His dwelling was a good substantial farm-house, where nothing was wanting. Everybody caressed him ; and his only business was to accompany the farmer as he rode round his fields, once a day, and to be on the hearth by him when he sate in his great chair and smoked his pipe. He was the best dog in England, Mrs. Hodgson declared, for he drove all the beggars away ; he was the best in the world, the farmer himself asserted, for he heard him barking at all hours of the night ; and exactly in proportion as he broke their rest did he mend his own character. One day, however, they had a tinker to mend the

kettles, and the next day Rover was missing. "Beshrew me," said Betty Scuttle, the maid, "if that gipsy hasn't *ticed* him away!" "It is the very thing!" exclaimed the farmer, puffing a great smoke out of his pipe; and incontinently mounting his horse, he rode to the gipsy camp on the common. "Well, my lads," said he, as he saw them rising up from their huts in a bustle at his approach, "what have you done with my dog?" "God bless your honour! your dog! why has somebody taken your honour's dog? and did you think any of us could have done such a thing? O master!" said three or four of them together, "we didn't suppose you would have thought so badly of us. When was anything of yours missing in all the years and the times that we have been here?" "The dog! the dog!" impatiently said the farmer, who hated speeches; and nevertheless an old woman was putting herself in an attitude of eloquence, to prove that they knew nothing of it, when Rover himself, with a struggle and a howl, broke out of a tent just by, and appeared in a thousand vagaries of joy before his master, with an old rag of a red cloak tied about his neck.

"The villains!" muttered Hodgson, "I'll rid the country of them;" and, spurring his horse, he was in ten minutes at the gates of Justice Gatliffe. The justice, a stout old man, in a large, powdered wig, and his pretty daughter, were sitting under the veranda, by the door. The farmer was a tenant, and a favourite of the justice; and after mutual compliments had passed, the justice's daughter was struck with admiration of Rover. "What a beautiful dog, Mr. Hodgson!" "Ay," said the justice, "a fine fellow, truly!" "Well, ma'am," added Hodgson, "and if you would like the dog now, you shall have it with all the pleasure in the world; and yet, do you know, it is about

that very dog that I am come hither at this blessed time. Those thievish, vagabond gipsies stole him yesterday, and it's only by chance of the old red rag that ye see about his neck that he made his escape. Odds bodikins, miss! if his worship, your father, would but send them out of the country, he would do a good service." "And that I will, speedily," exclaimed the justice, "I will rid the country of the caitiffs." In fact, nothing could have pleased him better,—a bitter enemy was he of all beggars, gipsies, strolling players,—of all that class which he called "the rascal rabble," and his anger against them had been doubled by a witty ballad-maker, who, in revenge for having been committed to the house of correction, had put him into verse, and sung him all over the country on a halfpenny strip of dirty paper, with an ugly woodcut at its top. "Thank you! thank you!" said Miss Gatliffe with rapture to the farmer. "Thank you! thank you!" said the farmer to the justice, for his promise of vengeance; and so well was that vengeance executed, that not a gipsy could be found the next day in all the lordship.

Great, however, was the farmer's surprise, in a very few days to hear that the gipsies, in order to revenge themselves, had made a desperate and wholesale attack upon the justice's game in all quarters; and greater still in a few days more, to learn that several were in custody, and being old offenders in that line, were expected to be transported: but ten times greater became his amazement to hear that the justice himself was missing. The whole country was in wonder and alarm. He had gone out for a short ride, when Rover, who had accompanied him, suddenly came back, panting, whining, and exhibiting the utmost uneasiness; and soon afterwards, the horse appeared, returning without his master, but returning with perfect

quietness and composure, and shewing no other symptom of disorder than having the bridle beneath his feet.

The terror and confusion of the family may be imagined. Away went half-a-dozen servants in quest of their master; and away went Rover, running and barking before them; and impatient for their speed to equal his own, till he led them up a glen in the heath, to the ruins of an old castle. When they came thither, however, nothing was to be seen. In vain they sought around; no person, nor trace of any person, was visible; and they returned, scolding poor Rover for a simpleton. Rover, nevertheless, lingered still about the place; and it was only by earnest calling and whistling to him that he was prevailed on to follow them. Every hundred yards he again stopped, looked wistfully after them, but refusing to follow; and the moment they turned towards him he wheeled round, with a toss of his head, and began galloping back. Struck by the dog's obstinacy, they agreed once more to follow him, but it was with no better success; so they went off in different directions.

The country was traversed far and wide, but in vain. The country people persuaded themselves that the justice had fallen into the river; his daughter was overwhelmed with affliction; though all besides gave up the search, she was still unsatisfied; and Rover was as restless as herself. All day he was continually whining, and running to the door, as if he fain would persuade her to follow, till, struck by his behaviour, she determined that she would. Never was there seen so joyful a creature. He ran, he jumped, he galloped round, barking, in great circles; and, as his mistress and the servants followed, he again led the way to this very old ruin. "It's of no use madam, it's of no use," said the servants, as they once more went over the building, "we have examined every chink and corner. The dog

has got some crotchet into his head, but what we cannot pretend to tell." Miss Gatliffe sate down on a stone, faint and overcome by three days' sorrow, and renewed disappointment—when hark! it was the barking of Rover somewhere below, as if he were furious. Away went the lady—away went the servants, following the sound, and soon found themselves at the foot of the tower, before a low, damp arch, overgrown with an elder tree. Within was Rover, as furiously barking as ever, and entering, they found him at a door which was fast locked. They immediately began to batter it with stones, to force it open; and hush!—could it be true?—it was! They heard the well-known voice of the justice himself, encouraging them to persevere. One general thrust! the door flew open, and the lady was in her father's arms!

It would be hard to tell, however, which was most overcome, the lady by her previous sorrowful, and present joyful excitement, or her father by the effect of his confinement. "It is well you are come," said he; "I could not have held out much longer. Three days have I been in this cold, damp dungeon. The villain gipsies, when they forced me in hither, left me some food—mutton of my own flock, and bread of my own corn, and departed. I have seen nothing of them since. The food has long been spent; and my continued efforts to effect my escape were nearly exhausted too. I heard the voice of my servants and of Rover near me on the first day, but I could not make them hear me; and I have been in utter despair of ever being found. I believe, however, my life would have depended upon the fate of those gipsies who are to be tried to-morrow.*

* The famous moss-trooper, Johnnie Armstrong, once carried off a Scotch judge in a similar manner, and for a similar purpose.

These words explained the whole mystery ; and I have only to add, that the gipsies were transported for life. Rover, advanced to the pinnacle of glory at Gable-hall, was held a wonder of attachment and sagacity. He had made the fortune he set out to seek. The justice has long been dead ; but Rover may be seen at this day, before the door, ready to testify his satisfaction in your notice, by a flap or two of his tail on the ground, but too fat and lazy to rise at any one's call but that of his mistress.

THE DOGS OF OLDACRE.

WE were extremely interested in the different occurrences in the life of poor Rover, but more than all with the account of Ben, the shepherd lad. There was something so affecting in his active sprightly spirit, his good heart, and his early death, that there was not a dry eye amongst us. Presently, my worthy old grandfather said, "What wonderful things dogs are ! This story brings to my recollection those two noble dogs at Oldacre ;—you remember them, Cousin John, don't you ? Two grand setters that Squire Mills used always to have at his heels whether it was shooting season or not." "To be sure," said Cousin John ; "just one the picture of the other—as like as pin to pin, or pear to pear." "Well, Squire Mills, as you know, had an estate in Oxfordshire, a hundred miles off at least ; and there he used to go twice a-year to receive his rents ; and he never went while he had these dogs but he took one with him. When the dog was tired he let him go up into his chaise and ride, and when he was tired of riding, the dog leaped out and jogged along again till he was tired again. Squire Mills always stopped at the Mitre Inn at Oxford ; and it so happened on one occasion that, as his

dog followed him up the stable-yard, a great mastiff, which was chained to a kennel, suddenly rushed out, seized on the setter, and, before he could be beaten off, had very severely worried him. Squire Mills was very angry, and the innkeeper made many apologies, but that did not cure the dog's wounds; and Squire Mills, who said he would rather have given five pounds than the dog had been so used, set off homeward in no very good humour. The dog, which seemed very much hurt, lay whining, and appearing very uneasy in the bottom of the chaise all the way home, and when they got there the keeper was ordered to pay every attention to him, and do all that he could for him. But the dog lay in his kennel for more than a week, and seemed in a very poor way indeed. He would not eat, and the keeper was very doubtful what would be the upshot of it, when, one morning, he was very much surprised to find both he and his fellow dog missing. All inquiries were made, but nothing could be heard of them, and it was concluded that they were stolen. Squire Mills immediately offered five-and-twenty guineas reward for the discovery of the thief; but no thief was heard of, or the dogs either, till a week afterwards, when they again entered the yard, but two such poor, jaded, worn-down creatures as never were seen. They were apparently starved to the very point of death, covered with dust, and, in fact, in such a condition, that, notwithstanding all that could be done, they both died in the course of a few days. On examining them after death they appeared to have been shot at, various shot-corns being found in their skins. Nothing, however, came to light about it; and on the next rent-day, Squire Mills made his journey into Oxfordshire without either of his favourite dogs. As he passed the kennel of the mastiff at the inn at Oxford, he could not

help looking with resentment towards it, when, to his surprise, instead of the mastiff which had been there many years, he saw quite another dog. ‘And so you have parted with that savage brute of a mastiff that worried my setter so, the last time I was here,’ he said to the ostler. ‘Ay,’ replied the ostler, ‘there’s a curious thing about that sir. The dog was worried dead on the spot, at the door of his own kennel; and, if I am not much mistaken, your setter helped to do it, too!’ ‘My setter!’ said Squire Mills, with great surprise, ‘what do you mean?’ ‘I mean, sir,’ said the ostler, ‘that about a week after you was here last, when your dog unfortunately got so towzled by old Sampson, the mastiff, we heard all of a sudden a terrible noise of dogs fighting in the yard, and on running out, saw two great dogs fiercely at work with old Sampson. They had got him down, and seemed tearing him into very atoms. Our master made no more to do, but in he ran, snatched down the gun, and fired at the dogs; but it was too late, they were just going over the yard wall together, and, I dare say, got off without the peppering master meant for them. But there, however, was Sampson, as dead at his kennel side as the stones that he lay upon.’

“‘And you thought,’ said Squire Mills, ‘that one of the dogs resembled my setter.’ ‘Nay,’ said the ostler, ‘both of them! One was the very picture of the other, and if they were not yours, they were no dogs at all.’

“‘It is wonderful,’ said Squire Mills; ‘but I have not a doubt but you are quite right in your belief; and this accounts for what has till this moment very much puzzled me. My dog was so resentful of the injury and insult that he received from your mastiff, that he without doubt communicated his grievances to his brother dog, and prevailed on him to set out on a pilgrimage of revenge. The dogs

disappeared for a week or more, together; they came back wounded, and in that miserable plight that they never recovered it. The dogs, let me tell you are both dead; and I would not have taken a hundred pounds for them.'

"The ostler, and indeed all the people about the inn, were wonderfully surprised at the story, and a wonderful circumstance it was to be sure."

"Wonderful indeed!" said all the juvenile group. "Ay, wonderful, wonderful," said Cousin John; "but is all true d'ye think? do you know it for a real, downright fact, Mr. Redfern?"

"True?" said my grandfather, "it is just as true as you sit there. I had it word for word, nay, I have had it word for word twenty times from Squire Mills himself."

"Well," said Cousin John, "then it *is* wonderful. Why what men—except real Christians, who should know better than to be revengeful—what men could have done more? And what a hero of a dog!—and what a friend of a dog that old fellow was that had been at home and suffered nothing, to set out on such an expedition! But it is past all my notions how these dogs could tell one another all about the matter."

With this, up started Cousin John, said "good-night," in his usual blunt way, and in another minute we heard him in his loud earnest voice, telling the whole story to old Samuel Davis, in the kitchen; and very likely he would tell it to every one that he met for the next three or four days.

The very next evening, the whole of the same company were again assembled round our fire, and we were very earnest to hear just the same things over again. "Ay, I should like to hear the account of those two Oldacre setters, very well myself," said Cousin John; "I find that many people here know the fact, and that it is a real fact."

"To be sure it is," said my grandfather; "but I should like to hear those verses again which my daughter repeated." "Yes, yes," said we;—but my mother said "No, enough of the Wind in a Frolic, suppose we now have

THE WIND IN A RAGE.

I sung to the little folk
Of the wind in a joke;
Let us now pen a page
Of the wind in a rage.

OUT sprang the wind from its hidden lair,
With a bound like a tiger, a growl like a bear.
'Twas an autumn eve, as with fierce affright,
It scowled through the air as grim as night:
Fast flew the clouds at its demon breath;
Staggered the earth as with stroke of death;
And a lurid gleam was in the sky,
Where the strength of its rage was rushing by.

Oh, terrible wind! who then could know
'Twas the very same wind that wont to blow
In the fields of spring, with a pulse as meek
As an infant's breath on its mother's cheek;
Waivering on from stem to stem,
Of the first young flowers, scarce bending them;
The purple orchis, the cowslip's crown,
The burnished king-cups bowing down,
With a loving stress, that wooed away
Their fragrant spirits in its play!

Oh, who could have deemed it the very breeze,
That shook the gold locks of laburnum trees;
That through the garden, gentle and slow,
Scattered the pear-bloom down like snow;

And the rose and lilac gave it charge,
To winnow their odorous life at large ?

Lithe as the snake, as the lion bold,
Cruel and huge as the giants old,
Like a spirit of violence on it pass'd,
To scatter and batter, to crush and blast !

The shepherd upon his mountain path,
Saw in the heavens its coming wrath;
And his very dog of its power aware,
Whined and crouched with a rueful stare.
The tiler beheld its ominous frown,
And from the house-ridge hastened down;
The miller did nimbly strip his sails;
The farm-wife set down her milking pails,
And ran with wild speed and mien aghast,
To close her doors and windows fast;
Snatched from the wavering garden line,
Her dangling caps and linens fine;
Marked how the swine to shelter sped,
And sate by the fire in quaking dread.

Far on the seas did the sailors spy
The coming fury, and ran on high—
A busy swarm at the captain's call,
Amid the ropes, and masts so tall;
They furled up the sails like clouds of air,
And the gallant ship stood silent and bare.

And well for those that with timely note,
Saw that the air-fiend was afloat;
For, with bellowing din, like thunder deep,
It burst on the earth with a stunning sweep.
The sea-waves up into foam were sent,
And over the land it roaring went;
With stifling vengeance scoured the plain:
Man, and beast, and bird in vain

Battled with its outrageous mood;
And from town to town, from wood to wood,
On it went roaring and unwithstood:
Crouched in dread silence beast and bird;
Men in their dwellings spoke unheard,
For it burst on their roofs with the thundering shock
Of the tempest waves on a mid-sea rock:
But many a one did think and pray,
For each living thing 'neath its power that lay;
But most of all for the sailor, driven
With crashing masts and cordage riven,
All night the darkling sea along,
In sufferance blind, and patience strong.

It passed, and in the morning street,
Did the groups who gather up marvels meet;
And all afar you might discern,
There circled amongst them tidings stern.
Said one, "The crazy cottage that stood
In the steep hill-croft beside the wood,
Fell with the very first blast that came,
And was burnt to dust in its own hearth-flame.
The bed-ridden man sprang up and cried,
And reached the door, and there he died;
And his sickly daughter, with frenzied pains,
Dragged from the fire his old remains."
"Hobb's mill is smashed, sail, wheel, and crank;"
"The lake," said another, "has burst its bank!
A hundred oaks in the forest are gone,
That stood in the days of old King John;
With rifted trunk and shattered head,
They lie on the turf like giants dead."
Along the street there came a child,
Half naked and sooty, and weeping wild;

"Why do you weep, my little dear?"
 "The chimney stack!" she cried with fear,
 "The chimney stack, the floor fell through,
 And has killed my mother and baby too!"
 "Trifles are these!" a hoarse voice cried,
 "Go to the beach and the ocean wide;
 There every wave that comes on shore,
 Bringeth a drowned body or more.
 Many a boat in the angry swell,
 Floateth about like an empty shell;
 Keel upward some, and vacant all—
 The people were drowned in the fiendish squall;
 And casks, and chests, and timbers grand,
 Of a mighty vessel bestrew the strand."
 Terrible wind! oh, who could deem,
 As it curled the top of his native stream,
 And lifted the leaf of his garden bower,
 Gentle in spirit, and gentle in power,
 That thus it would rise like a monster vast,
 To scatter and batter, to crush and blast!





CHAPTER XIII.

FIRESIDE AMUSEMENTS—CONTINUED.

GHOST-STORIES, IN WHICH IT TURNS OUT THAT THE
GHOSTS WERE NO GHOSTS AT ALL.

ONE evening, when our old friends were again sitting with us, we children were very importunate for a ghost-story. “A ghost-story!” cried Cousin John—“a ghost-story? Why what silly creature has been putting such trash into your heads? Phoh! nonsense! I tell you there are no ghosts; and the man, or woman either, ought to be whipped that tells innocent children any such mischievous trumpery.” “O!” said my mother, laughing, “I’ll tell you a ghost-

story!" " You, cousin!" exclaimed Cousin John, looking hard in my mother's face, as she sate quietly at her sewing — " You don't stuff your children with raw-head and bloody-bone tales, do you?" " You shall hear," replied my mother smiling.

CRACK-A-MARBLE, THE BOASTER.

" I had been one day to the village of Loscoe, to see a worthy old friend of mine who was very ill.—I found him indeed, so ill, and his family in such distress about him, that I could not feel easy to return till evening. It was in the winter time, and the nights were long and dark. My maid had come to see me home, and we were quietly plodding along Loscoe-lane, which you know is both a very solitary place and a very miry one, by the light of a lantern, picking our steps along the narrow causeway of stone, without which there would have been no getting on at all; and which yet were so broken, that without great care we should every minute have found ourselves up to the knees in mud or water. We had got within half a mile of this village, and a good way past the solitary old house known by the name of Loscoe-lane Bogard-house, when we heard some one coming behind us at a distance, shouting aloud, and making a very great noise. As it was the voice of a man, and as he advanced fast upon us, we thought it the best to conceal the lantern beneath the girl's thick cloak, and to stand close in a nook to let the fellow go past, if possible, without perceiving us. We did not stand long without discovering who the man was. It was a man that, especially in his drink, was accustomed to boast very largely of his prowess and fearlessness, and to use so continually to his comrades the absurd expression, ' I'll crack your marbles!' meaning he would, or could master them, knock

them down, or do as he pleased with them, that he had got the nick-name of Crack-a-marble. On he came, now shouting aloud, ‘Come on then, you Loscoe-lane bogards! Crack-a-marble fears none of you. Come a hundred of you bogards, barguests, bogles, or any of your comical family.—Come as soon as you please—I'll crack your marbles in a jiffey!’

“It was evident that the fellow was really afraid, and was swaggering to keep his courage up—and this was soon put to the proof; for he speedily passed by us as we stood concealed in the nook, and he had not got a hundred yards beyond us when we heard a most awful sound, something between a low roar and a groan: and Crack-a-marble heard it too,—for great fellow as he was, being full six feet high, and strong to boot, and with all his swagger, he instantly took to his heels at a most wonderful rate. We heard his great hob-nailed shoes go rapidly clipper-clap, clipper-clap, along the causeway, all the way up the long hill as far as the nearest house, which was the Old Bear public-house. We saw a light flash across the road, from the door of the Old Bear, as it was opened, and speedily vanish again, as it was as quickly shut; and we knew that the valiant Crack-a-marble had taken refuge there from the groans of the Loscoe-lane bogard. There sure enough he had taken refuge, in a most awful fright, and in a desperate perspiration, what with his fright and his run up the hill; and a most marvellous tale he told, of horrible noises, rattling chains, flashing of fires, and crashing of hedges as if half-a-dozen wagons were going over them. For our parts, all that we heard when we came up to the place where Crack-a-marble had been so suddenly put to flight, was somebody behind the hedge, laughing to himself most outrageously. I called out, ‘Who is there? who

is that?' 'O! is that you, Mrs. Middleton?' said some one. 'Yes,' I said, 'it is I, sure enough; but, who are you?' 'O! bless your life, it is Tom Caladine—old Tom Caladine—I've almost frightened that poor bragging Crack-your-marble to death, and now I think I shall die myself with laughing. I canna gie o'er! I canna gie o'er!' And then he burst out again, till he even groaned with excess of laughter, and we began to fear that the old man would really do himself some mischief. He was an old collier that had worked for Mr. Middleton for twenty years or more. At length we got him to restrain himself a little, and I asked him how he came to think of frightening poor Crack-a-marble so. 'Why Missis,' said he, 'I never yet knew a swaggerer but was a coward; and if you had seen this long-legged fellow bullying and vapouring over his drink as I have, threatening to crack honest men's marbles,—meaning, I reckon, their skulls,—and hectoring over simple folks that meddled none with him, you would have been glad to give him a fright too, I'm sure. So, as good luck would have it, I just chanced to hear my man coming shouting along as I was turning down home here; and the thought popped into my head in a moment, and I had but just time to get behind this bush when he came up, O lorts! O lorts!—how the fool did but jump, as he heard the first groan! and how he *can* run! If he be the biggest coward i'th' parish, which is sartain, I really believe there's never a man in this parish, or the next, that can match him at a race.' And with this Tom bid us good-night, and went off home, stopping to laugh again every now and then as heartily as ever."

"Well," said Cousin John, as soon as the company, who laughed almost as heartily as Tom Caladine himself, had regained their composure, and wiped the tears from their

eyes—"Well, if that be one of your ghost-stories, it will do; and I can tell you one myself that may perhaps amuse our good friend William Woolley here. It is the story of a florist, William. You'll like to hear that, I think, shan't you?"

"Why that," said old William Woolley, "will be just as it turns out: if the story is a good one, it will be never the worse for being about a florist. I'll tell you exactly my mind on it when I've heard it."

"Well, then," said Cousin John, "don't be offended if I should let out any secrets of the craft, William. You florists have cunning ways to produce prize flowers, that, may be, you would not like all the world to know."

"O!" replied old William Woolley; "out with any secret of that kind, Mr. John, I beg—out with it. I'm quite curious to learn any secret about raising prize flowers that you can have, John."

Here all were very merry at old William's energetic appeal and grimace, lifting his eyebrows and his hands at once, drawing his mouth across his face with closed lips, and looking very funny at Cousin John.

"Well, well," said Cousin John, "we shall see!—What I have to say is of—

THE FLORIST AND THE SEXTON.

"THERE was a florist lived in a village, as it might be this, and he was a very clever fellow in his way too, as our friend William is. You may imagine our William walking about his garden, all amongst beds of tulips, ranunculus, auriculas, and polyanthus, and it will help your imaginations. There you see a snug cottage, with plants in pots basking under its sunny walls of a fine spring day. There you see a tall hedge and tall old bank screening off the

north and east winds. There you see glass frames and hand-glasses all about, and little sticks standing in the beds with carnations tied up to them ; and here canvass awnings stretched over beds of different plants. It's a pretty sight as anybody needs to see ; and any one that has seen our friend William's plants and flowers may imagine what those of the florist that I am speaking of were, though that garden was far enough from here. The fact was, that this man beat all the other florists in the country. His plants and flowers seemed to thrive by magic. Nobody's came up so strong and fresh as they did ; and when the other florists came to see the man's garden—as William's friends hereabout come to see his—to *admire* it, as they say—they could not help expressing their wonder. ‘What do you get that suits them so well?’ said they to the florist. ‘O !’ said he, ‘it is only attending to them ; I attend to them ; you see things won’t do without attending to.’ That’s just what William here has said to me and you, and a hundred other people, I dare say, when we have asked the same thing of him.”

“ Well,” said William Woolley, “ go on, Mr. John, go on.”

“ That was all they could ever get out of the florist,” continued Cousin John ; “ but they were sure to add—‘but, however, there’s no telling what sort of a flower there may be, after all.’ When the flowers came, mind you though, they were just as good as the plants promised. Such finely grown, clear, regularly marked flowers, as you never saw. All the tribe of florists were full of amazement, and jealousy too, I’ll venture to say. Don’t you think they would, William ?”

“ It’s likely,” said William, with a nod.

“ All that the wondering florists could, however, get out

of the man was—‘It's good looking after—it's my hobby, you know—that's all; attention does wonders.’

“But the mischief of it was, that all these wondering brother florists were just as attentive as this man could be. Their plants were their hobby, too; but their attention would not do the wonders that his did, and the puzzle was just as great as ever. They tried everything that they could think of to come up with him. They got fresh earth off the common,—decayed vegetable matter out of the hollows of trees. They dug and watered, and screened and watched behind this mysterious man's hedge into the bargain; but they were not a step the nearer! His flowers grew into the most glorious things, and he carried off all the prizes far and near. There was nothing for it, but trying some of his plants. It was a very honest neighbourhood, and nobody ever thought of stealing any, especially as the man used to be everlastingily dragging a monstrous steel-trap about his garden, and sometimes in the day-time hanging it by the house-side, where anybody could see the length and sharpness of its teeth. It was, however, a very honest neighbourhood;—it was a common remark there, that nobody ever took anything that was too heavy or too hot for them; and so these zealous florists bought at a great price the very best flowers the man had; and he was very liberal. He knew they wanted to beat him with his own weapons, but he did not mind that. He sold *anything* that he had, and the others bought *all* that he had that was good for anything. The florist only smiled when he saw his garden thus stripped of all his best things, and said, ‘Well, he must try again;—attention did wonders!’ And, truly, the wonders that his attention wrought were wonderful; for, the very next season his garden would have such a host of flowers as was not in the

whole country besides! I need not attempt to express the amazement and vexation of all the other florists,—they were beyond bounds;—the man got all the money and all the prizes, and seemed as quiet and contented in the midst of his gain and his glory as ever; he had but one speech on all occasions: ‘Attention would do wonders!’

“What do you think of that, William Woolley, eh? There was a bit of secret there, I should think; what will you give me now to let you into it?”

“I’ll give you my attention,” said old William, very quietly,—“attention will do wonders, you know!”

“Very true,” replied Cousin John, as coolly; “but all this time, do you know, there had been another man in the parish as much in a puzzle as the florists,—and that was the sexton. This worthy official had been long struck with a *fancy* that the soil of *his garden*, that is the churchyard, the garden in which he dug and delved more than in any other, on certain occasions was somehow a-missing. When he filled in a grave sometimes he was surprised to see that, notwithstanding the large coffin which it had received, there was not earth enough to pile up that long narrow mound over it, on which he was wont to bestow great pains, and in the construction of which he took considerable pride. This posed him a good deal. He thought of it again and again; and it was not long before the same thing occurred to him. Turning it over in his head, it struck him that in both the last cases the grave had lain open all night. A thought—a suspicion—sprung out of this. He resolved to dig the next over-night;—he did so, and the result was exactly the same. He dug the next on the day that it was wanted only, and the soil rose on being filled in, with as swelling a mount as he could desire. It was as clear to him as the shine of his own lantern, that

there was robbery!—sacrilege! There was some wretch base enough to rob the graves of the very dust of their forefathers; and the uncharitable old Spade-ace did not even hesitate to fix his suspicions strongly on the florist! ‘Ay!’ thought he to himself; ‘I have him now! That’s the grand secret of his wonderful success. ‘Attention does wonders’ with a vengeance! Why, the rascal would grind his grandmother into nourishment for his tulips and auriculas. ‘Attention!’ it’s attention to my new-made graves that has done the job; but, by the bones of parson Greatorex, that lie in the very centre of the chancel, I’ll pay *him* a little attention.’

“Old Spade-ace, according to his own phrase, said nothing to nobody; but the very next time that he dug a grave over-night, he went after it was dark, and wrapping himself in a sheet, squatted down in it. Here he remained, with a patience only to be produced by his huge indignation, till the clock from the tower had struck twelve, when he thought he heard a footstep somewhere in the churchyard. Cowering down, therefore, closely in the grave, he kept a sharp eye upwards, and sure enough in another minute there was a man hard at work on the side of the grave shoveling the rich soil into a basket! At the sound, for it was too dark for him to see more than something dimly moving, his heart seemed ready to burst with anger and impatience. Up he rose in his sheet, and no sooner did his head and shoulders appear above the grave in their white mantle, than there was a loud shriek close to his ear; down went the spade and basket, and the sacrilegious thief was off with rapid bounds. Old Spade-ace had been nimbler in his day, but wrath and curiosity gave him a lift. He leaped from the grave, and followed the sound of the flying steps with all his ability. As he ran, he could per-

ceive some man not far before him; he found he gained upon him, and he soon came so near, that the flying thief in his alarm cried out lustily, ‘Satan, I defy thee! Satan, I defy thee!’ He knew the voice;—it was the florist. At the certainty of the fact, old Spade-ace gave a leap for joy that he had made out the man’s secret, and for pride that he had hit on so clever a scheme to detect him; but he still ‘said nothing to nobody;’ he wrapped his sheet only faster round him, and kept running on. As he ran, the florist—for it *was* the florist to a certainty, William—the poor florist kept crying out as fast as he could bawl, ‘Satan, I defy thee! Satan, I defy thee!’ The sexton followed in silence, and it was not long before they reached the florist’s house, into which the poor man sprung, and would have banged the door behind him, but old Spade-ace was too quick for him—he set his foot between the door and the door-post just as it was closing, and wrenching it open with a mighty push, leaped into the middle of the floor before the terrified florist, opened his sheet, and nodding at him with a face red with his race, and with eyes that flashed with malicious fun, said, ‘Attention does wonders!’ and then walked gravely out.

“The florist had left a candle burning on the table, so that he saw who it was that had pursued him, and the fear of Satan only gave way to fears nearly as bad.

“The next morning, the sexton’s tale had flown all round the village almost before the sun was up; all were laughing at the poor florist’s disgrace; all the brother florists were running to his cottage to *congratulate* him on the event,—when behold! they found the house empty, the garden-gate unlocked, all the noble plants standing blooming in their glory, without any one to tend them;—the florist had vanished, and never re-appeared.”

Cousin John, who evidently expected that William Woolley would endeavour to vindicate the florist, looked hard at him as he ended, and said, "what do you think of that?" "I think," said the old man very quietly, "that it was a pity the poor man was so far *overseen*," meaning, in his provincial language, so far off his guard, "as to do such a thing; but I in no way deny but that churchyard earth might be very rich, though I never tried it. There *are* other ways of raising eminent flowers, Mr. John, and I am also of the florist's mind, that attention can do wonders. But enough of that. I shall now volunteer a little story for the amusement of the boys, which is a ghost-story, and yet, like those already related, has no ghost in it.

THE CUTLER, AND HIS APPRENTICES.

"IN Sheffield, some years ago, lived a cutler that was very desirous to grow speedily rich, and for this purpose he took a great number of apprentices, whom he worked hard and fed badly. They were lads that he procured from the parish, with whom he got five pounds a-piece, and who, once off the parish's hands, and having probably no very near relations living, were seldom afterwards inquired after. As the man's sole object was to get rich, he cared not how cruelly the lads were treated, so that he got all that he could out of them. He had them up by four or five o'clock in a winter's morning, and kept them hard at work till it was time for bed again. Summer and winter, it was nothing but work, work, work; and they were fed and clothed in the most sordid manner; in fact, they were complete slaves, and cuffs and blows and hard labour were the only plentiful things they got. This went on till it grew intolerable. Time, instead of bringing any relief, only made the old man more griping, selfish, and cruel. But now there was

an ingenious fellow amongst the apprentices, who said to his fellows, that if they would join with him he would undertake to mend matters for them. To this they readily agreed. This shrewd youth had seen that their master, like many other miserly fellows, was as superstitious as he was avaricious. He was a bachelor; for he was too grasping to think of maintaining a wife and family. The young man had a friend a tanner in the town. To him we went, and procured the loan of a huge black ox's hide, having a long tail and a tremendous pair of horns. This he conveyed secretly to his chamber; and, as the master always went to bed at the same time that his apprentices did, that he might be able to call them up at an early hour in the morning, instead of getting into bed, the young man arrayed himself in the hide, and cutting a most formidable figure, waited at his master's chamber-door, till he saw through the key-hole that he was just got into bed. At that moment he opened the door and stalked slowly into the room. No sooner did the old cutler perceive that hideous and black apparition, than crying, 'Lord have mercy upon me! Lord save me!' he popped under the bed-clothes, and held them down upon him in an agony of terror. The apprentice, seeing the success of his scheme, rushed fiercely to the old man's bed, and tossing and goring furiously with his horns, and clattering on the floor with his feet, said in a gruff voice—

' Old man! old man! for thy cruelty,
Body and soul thou art given to me!
Let me hear but once more those apprentices' cries,
And I'll push thee, and crush thee, and bore out thy eyes.'

With that he gave the trembling old wretch two or three good pokes with his horns, laid on him heartily with a strong staff that he had in his hands, knocked down the

candle, and disappeared. The rest of the apprentices, who had stood barefoot at the door to enjoy the joke, were obliged to run and thrust their heads into their beds, to prevent their laughter being heard. Scarcely could they sleep all night for their merriment; but the old man was as still in his room as a stone.

"At their usual hour, long before daylight, they jumped out of bed, and began to dress themselves with sufficient bustle to attract the old man's attention; but scarcely were they on the floor when he called out to know what they were after; and being answered that they were getting up, 'O!' said he, 'never mind, my lads—never mind; go to bed again, it will be time enough these two hours.' The lads, of course, popped into bed again with right goodwill, and very much amused at the success of their experiment. They lay till they heard the old man himself getting up; when they arose, and got busily to work. At breakfast and dinner they were agreeably surprised at the improvement of their fare, and at the coaxing tone in which their master spoke to them. 'Help yourselves, lads—help yourselves; those that work hard should live well!' A maxim that they had never heard out of his mouth before. It was not many days neither before he sent for a tailor, and had them all put into good handsome suits of clothes, that they might make their appearance at church, a place that they never before heard him mention, but whither he now duly went, with his train of apprentices walking in good order after him. Nay, whenever a holiday came, instead of being, as they were before, the only people at work, their master was the first to tell them of it, and advise them to get out and have a mouthful of fresh air in the fields, saying very feelingly—'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!' In short, the old man was cured of his cruelty—fear had

done that which conscience could not; from that day forward, firmly believing that he had had a visit from the foul fiend, he continued to treat his apprentices with laudable indulgence; and it is believed that he did it the more willingly, that he found to his surprise, that though his boys worked fewer hours, they actually did much more work, and did it better; which is likely, for when they were well fed, well clothed, and well used, they worked with a hearty goodwill. It is even said that before he died, the clever apprentice, who had been taken into partnership, actually told him of the trick that he had played off upon him, and that, though he was very angry at it at first, he afterwards joined heartily in the laugh when it was mentioned, and said that it was the best thing that ever happened to him; for without that he should have gone on abusing his apprentices, and making himself more niggardly and more miserable than they. It was very curious to hear his version of the apparition, as it appeared to his terrified eyes,—for he got even to like to tell it amongst two or three of his intimate friends, and described the look of the black fiend, with his tremendous horns, his long sweeping tail, his goggle eyes, and his terrible voice, when he shook his head and said, ‘I will b-o-o-o-re out both thy eyes!’ He could hardly ever be brought to believe that he did not see the fiend whisk out the candle with his tail, and vanish in a flash of fire.”

“I am glad,” said my grandfather, “that they told the old man. It was a capital trick and turned out very well, but after all, it was a deception—and I am not fond of deception of any kind.”

“O! we may be more nice than wise, I think,” said Cousin John. “It is all very well that the old fellow did know; but if he had not, I should not have grieved. It

was what he richly deserved, and I admire the young man's spirit. I wish all niggardly old curmudgeons were cheated just as cleverly."

"But we have not had a ghost-story after all," said I; "there was no more ghost in those stories, than there was in the fright I got with the cobweb-brush."

"What was that?" said they.

"What was that?" I answered, "why, it was only that one night I woke, and by the glimmering of the fire which there happened to be in my room, it being very damp weather in winter, I saw to my astonishment, my room door standing open, and the bushy head of a giant looking over it from behind. You may be sure I was frightened enough, and crept down into bed, and lay there expecting every minute to be seized by the giant. But after about an hour, as he did not come out, I began to muster up courage, and to think it was nothing alive. I therefore determined to find out what it was; and getting out of bed, I got the fire-shovel and went poking it along the floor till it was poked under the door, where the giant's feet should be, if he had any. And, in truth, the moment the fire-shovel went under the door, I saw the door pushed towards me, and the giant's head move too. Down went the fire-shovel, and at one leap I was in bed, hearing a terrible clatter on the floor behind me, and believing now surely that I should be eaten up in a moment. I wasn't eaten, however; and as all was still again, I once more peeped out, and behold! there lay the great Turk's-head brush! The servant had been cobwebbing the ceilings, and had left the brush in the corner of my room, and occasioned me a terrible fright."

All laughed heartily at my giant; and my father said, "Well, Will, I hope you will never believe any more silly

stories of ghosts, for if they all were searched into, they would turn out pretty much as these did."

Here the subject of ghost stories ended, for old Samuel Hand began to tell of a little occurrence with some of his workmen which had puzzled him a good deal, and as it is very characteristic of the man and the sort of life led in that simple hamlet, I shall close these conversations with it.

SAMMY HAND, AND HIS BRICKLAYERS.

" You know," said the old gentleman, " I have pulled down the cottage below my garden, and rebuilt it. You know too, how particular bricklayers are in dining exactly at twelve, and giving over exactly at six. Well, I never was so puzzled by anything as by old Abraham Street, while building this cottage. The old man, you know, is as deaf as a door nail, and carries no watch, yet exactly at twelve I saw him wipe his trowel, and come down the ladder to dinner. The old man can't hear the church clock, that I am quite sure of,—yet see, said I, how he drops his trowel before it has done striking. Well, it must be the sun he goes by; but what a very exact notion he must have of its progress. It is wonderful what years of practice and experience will do. At six o'clock it was the same: the moment the church clock began to strike, he raised himself from his work, wiped his trowel, and came down. It is really wonderful, I said to myself, what a nice knowledge that old man has of the time—for the life of me I never could arrive at it. But if I was astonished that day, I was twice as much astonished the next; for it was thick and cloudy, it drizzled with misty rain, yet at twelve to a moment Abraham raised his head, wiped his trowel,

and came down. At six it was just as cloudy, and Abraham was just as exact.

"Lord bless me! I exclaimed to myself, how can the man be so accurate! All night I kept thinking of it; and at length I began to doubt whether it *was* the sun that he went by—whether, after all, he *could not* hear the church clock. But, said I to myself, I will see how that is: I *will* find it out; so away I went to Bill Newton, and desired him to put the church clock back half-an-hour, and not to do that neither till after it had struck eleven. He did so. As twelve drew near, I stood a little distance off to see what would happen; whether Abraham would find out the cheat. I stood with my watch in my hand, and, Lord bless me and save me! as sure as I live, the moment the finger touched the mark of twelve, up rose Abraham, wiped his trowel on his sleeve, and walked gravely down to dinner! 'Why,' said I to his man—'you are going to dinner to-day before twelve! it wants half an hour yet—the church-clock has not struck yet neither.' The man shook his head—'Measter doesn't mind about clocks; he knows the time—I warrant him he's right to a shaving.' 'Well, but,' said I, 'does he know better than my watch and the town-clock?' I did not let him see my watch, you know. 'Yes,' said the man as he brought his dinner-basket, and sate down on a pile of bricks beside Abraham—who had already spread out his dinner store and was eating away in defiance of all the clocks in the world, 'yes,' said the man, 'I'd swear against all the clocks in the country if Measter said they were wrong.'

"Well, this put me past all my reckoning—it could not be the church clock; that was altered, nay, it struck twelve just after they had finished their dinners. 'There!' I said, 'you hear it is just twelve now, you are evidently wrong.'

The man got up, but without evincing any surprise, or appearing for a moment staggered by the fact of the clock striking—and putting his hand in a funnel-shape to Abraham's ear, shouted as loud as he could—‘It's just now striking twelve by the church clock!’ ‘Striking twelve is it?’ said Abraham, with that slow, heavy way which deaf men have; ‘what has gotten the clock then?—it's wrong!’ That was all the notice they took of it! I was puzzled worse and worse! It could not be the clock, they did not go by that, that was clear; and it could not be the sun; for sun or no sun, Abraham worked on to a second, and without looking up, till the very moment,—raised himself, wiped his trowel, and came down to dinner, or to go home.

“All that night I kept turning the thing in my head. There must be something, I said, that Abraham went by. What could it be? Was there anything that he saw anywhere near, that guided him? Yes! I thought I had hit upon it. Yes! yes! it is the miller at the mill, on the hill—he has a good watch, he has his ears open too, and he stops his mill just at twelve, and goes to his dinner. That's it! that's it! I thought, but I will try that too. As soon as I had breakfasted next morning, I went up to the mill—told the miller my cause of wonder—bade him indulge me by not going to his dinner till half-past twelve that day, and by keeping the affair a secret. All that was agreed on, and, again, I looked at twelve o'clock to see the effect. The mill kept spinning on; but spite of the mill, Abraham raised himself exactly at twelve, wiped his trowel, and went to his dinner!

“The thing was utterly beyond comprehension—at six the mill did not stop, but continued to grind till dark, and besides, I saw that Abraham did not go by the

mill. What in the world did he go by then? I put that question to him. I got the man to bawl it into his ear. ‘How is it Abraham, you know the time so exactly at twelve and at six?’ ‘How do I know?’ said Abraham, ‘O, why I know by my feelings!’ By his feelings! No! that won’t do! I can’t take that in—that a man has feelings to a minute; there must be something else. I now thought it might be Marshall’s maid, who returned that way from milking her cows just about six o’clock. I got her to alter *her* time, and go half an hour sooner; but that made no difference, and I was quite at my wit’s end.”

“It certainly was very curious,” said several of the listeners, “and what did you make of it at last?”

“Why,” said Mr. Hand, “I am ashamed of my dulness; but I believe I never should have hit on the secret had not a mere accident thrown it in my way. I sent the man for some nails to the blacksmith’s, he was away at twelve, and Abraham kept working on till his return! There said I—I see it! it is the man—the man had a watch! The man had his ears open, and I had never thought of that! But I now kept my eye on him, I saw him take some bricks, ascend the ladder, set them down on the scaffold; and at the same moment Abraham wiped his trowel, and came down to dinner!

“‘Ha! ha!’ said I, accosting the man, ‘I see now how Abraham knows the time; it is you that let him know; you have been away, and Abraham has missed his reckoning, he did not know by his feelings!’

“The man smiled: ‘Sir,’ said he, ‘you have found it out: and you might have found it out before, if you had noticed that always at twelve and six I was upon the scaffold either with bricks or mortar, and gave Measter a twitch by the coat as I past. Poor man! that’s what he meant

by his feelings ; he felt me pluck his coat. The first thing that he ordered me to do when I came to be his man, was always to twitch his coat at twelve and six to a minute ; and I can trust to my watch to a second.'

"Lord bless me !" said I, " how simple things are when one once knows them."

"Simple enough," cried Cousin John—"I really wonder you did not twig the sign before."

"I wonder so too, now," said Mr. Hand—"but there's many a simpler thing has puzzled many a wiser man."





CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION OF FIRESIDE AMUSEMENTS.

SUCH were the simple stories and conversations that served to enliven that primitive but pleasant fireside; but every now and then Dr. Dally, when there, used to make a variety by tricks of sleight-of-hand that he knew, and by exhibitions which, though well known to all better acquainted with scientific principles, appeared to our young eyes as actual magic. One evening in he came, to our surprise, with Samuel Davis carrying the yard-cock in his hands. "Now," said he "I'll shew you a curiosity." He made Samuel Davis set the cock, which appeared very

desirous to get out of his hands, on the table. The cock made a great cackling and squalling, but Dr. Dally, causing some one to hold the cock's head close down to the table, took out a piece of chalk, and drew a line from his beak across the table. Samuel Davis and the person who held his head down were then commanded to let the cock go, and to our amazement he stood stock still, his beak fixed on the line, and seemed bound by a spell that he could not break. Presently after, Dr. Dally took up the cock and gave it to Samuel Davis to take away, when it seemed again to recover the use of its limbs, and began to squall and scuffle as hard as ever.

Of course this was a fact which wonderfully astonished us all, and made us attribute it to magic; but it is a well-known thing, and which anybody may do.

Another evening, he came hopping in with a face of great agony, and exclaimed, "See! see! what has happened!" We looked, and to our horror and amaze, saw a huge iron skewer thrust through the calf of his leg, going in on one side and passing out at the other, at least six inches. Everybody was frightened and horrified, when, pulling out the wire, he burst out a-laughing. When our surprise was sufficiently abated to allow us to attend, he shewed us that the wire was merely so bent in the middle as to pass behind the leg, and so only *looked* as if it passed through. When the thing was explained we had all a good hearty laugh at the joke and our fears, and then each of us boys must do the same trick.

On another occasion, seeing a long tobacco-pipe lying on the table, he took out his watch, laid it upon the table, balanced the pipe upon its face, took up a wine-glass, wiped it briskly with his handkerchief, held it to the fire a few seconds, and then approaching it near to one end of

the pipe, the pipe immediately began to run after the glass; and by carrying the wine-glass still a little before the pipe, he soon had the pipe spinning round on the watch-face at a rapid rate.

This is a very beautiful experiment, an electrical phenomenon, in fact, which may be exhibited in any house at any time. Another which delighted us very much, and which we very often afterwards used to repeat, as we did this, was one which shewed us other laws of matter quite as curious. This was to take a goblet—a common drinking-glass; fill it with water; then, holding it by the stem with one hand, place a piece of paper over the glass with the other hand; then drop that hand upon the paper, and, turning the glass upside down, take away the hand from beneath the paper, and the paper prevented the water from falling out. This curious effect, which is readily explained by the pressure of the air above being removed from the water by the glass being now uppermost; and the pressure of the air from beneath being sufficient to prevent its descent, while it has the paper as a solid medium to act against, was rendered more striking by his holding the glass bottom uppermost for some time, carrying it about from place to place, and even repeatedly shaking it strongly. Sometimes he would lay the glass mouth downwards on a table and draw the paper from under the glass, and there was the water still standing in the glass, and yet not a drop running out; here, however, unless the paper were very dexterously introduced again between the table and the glass, all the water was spilled in attempting to remove the glass, and you had a slop. A similar thing he sometimes shewed us, by filling a common milk-tin—one of those that have a circular handle over the top—with water, and swinging it slowly round, so as to let us see that when it was

over his head, with the bottom upwards, not a drop of water fell out. If it were only kept there one moment stationary, down came all the water in a deluge. This he did to shew us the effect of a centrifugal motion, and, when explained to us, interested us greatly, but was not so popular with us as the former.

Another of his favourite acts for our amusement was to represent a ship on fire at sea, by floating a lump of camphor on a large basin of water, and setting it on fire, when it floated about in a flame till totally consumed, while he kept our imaginations awake by talking of it as a real ship; pitying the people on board; asking us where they were to flee to on the wide, wide ocean, where there was no back-door to run out of; now imagining that he saw the people putting out a boat—now that we were near, in some other ship, and put out our boats to the aid of the distressed crew and passengers in that awful situation. And then he launched a couple of walnut-shells, and we propelled them to the side of the burning ship, and helped all the eager people in by degrees; and we were hard set to beat off the rest when our boats were full, and push away, and get them aboard of our vessel, and then back for more! And then, when we brought the last away, and once saw them in our strong fancies on our own deck, what a clapping of hands, and what a shout of triumph we set up! and it was only when we saw the poor blazing hulk topple over and go down, that we said—“O! the poor merchant at home, that knows nothing about it, and perhaps now is talking of ‘my ship on the high seas,’ and saying what he will give his wife and children when she comes richly laden safe into port.”

Another scheme which furnished its share of amusement was thus exhibited by our friend the doctor. A common

wine-bottle was set on the table, with the cork in it. In the cork he stuck a pin, till it stood firmly. He then took another cork and a couple of forks, one of which he thrust into the cork on each side, in a position partly horizontal, partly declining, then balancing this cork upon the head of the pin stuck in the lower one, he gave the forks a twirl, and they spun round, in the manner of a balance-wheel, and if well balanced would revolve for a considerable time.



One night the doctor astonished us by throwing a shilling upon the table, then called it, held out his hand for it, and, to our unutterable amazement, it jumped into his hand, and he put it into his pocket. One sight of this wonder did not satisfy us, and Dr. Dally repeated it again and again. Another time, he took a key, tied it at the end of a string, set fire to the string; and there, when it was burnt, was the key still hanging to it. Wonderful as we thought these things, the first was done merely by having a fine horse-hair tied to the shilling, which by the candle-light we did not perceive; the second by having previously steeped the string in a strong solution of salt. But there were other feats of legerdemain which the doctor performed to our vast delight, which we could not imitate, because they required great practice and dexterity,—such as conjuring balls or marbles under a candlestick, tricks with cards, and tricks with the magnet. The crowning enjoyment and wonder of all, however, was seeing the moving figures thrown on the wall from a magic-lantern which he once brought with him—perhaps the only one that ever reached that out-of-the-world place.

Such were the amusements of our winter fireside, to which our worthy old William Woolley contributed by pre-

senting us with an apple-mill and a jump-jack ; things which, as they gave us a deal of pleasure, I shall describe for the pleasure of other children ; for children cannot have too many of these cheap enjoyments, especially in a country place, and more especially as they exercise their ingenuity, and stimulate their faculties.

The apple-mill and jump-jack are thus made—



The jump-jack, or up-jack as it was called occasionally, was made of the breast-bone of a goose, and one of the bones called the merry-thought. It is necessary, in making a jump-jack, to have the goose carefully carved, so that neither of these bones may be injured. They are then to be well boiled and scoured, so as to be perfectly freed from all fleshy or oily matter. A hole is then bored through the ridge of the breast-bone, through which the merry-thought is to be put, and fastened with sealing wax, so as to resemble a pair of horns. To the two projections at the other end of the breast-bone must then be fastened a loop of strong string, not very tightly stretched. Between this loop of string must be put one end of a fine piece of stick, about three inches long, which must be turned round in the string, till the string is sufficiently twisted to give the force of a spring to the stick. Then, by sticking a small lump of pitch or shoemakers' wax in the hollow of the breast-bone, near the spot where the end of the stick reaches, and gently pressing the end of the stick upon it, it

will adhere for a short time, and then giving way, toss up the jump-jack. There are leaping-frogs made on the same principle, and sold in the toy-shops; but these jump-jacks being of home-manufacture, and having a grotesque and ghost-of-a-buffalo look, are much more entertaining. The sport is to set the jump-jack down on the floor, or on the table, and at the moment that you see it about to spring, cry, "jump, Jack!" or "up, Jack!" so that it seem to obey your bidding.

The apple-mill consists simply of a skewer, a nut, an apple, and a bit of twine. A hole is bored through the nut for the skewer to pass through, and another hole for the string. One end of the twine is fastened to the skewer within the nut, and the end of the skewer stuck into the apple; when the mill being held by the nut, and the twine, after being partly wound round the skewer, is pulled out, the mill spins round merrily.*

* I have seen the little boys in Germany with exactly such apple-mills in their hands.





CHAPTER XV.

SCHOOL-DAYS.

IN town or country, however pleasant it may be to be running about and playing, it is necessary still to go to school; and whether in town or country, school furnishes some of the most strong and marked days of a lad's life. I went to school as other little boys do, of course, and I dare say I thought it tedious enough to be poring over A B C, or learning to spell, when the sky was so blue, and the birds were singing so sweetly out of doors; but I remember nothing of this now; I only remember that my first teacher was Nanny Alldred, or as it was there pro-

nounced, Nanny Arred, an old woman who lived in a very little house just by our garden ; wore a large mob-cap, a broad striped bedgown, a large check apron, in which she used to go, when school was over, gathering sticks, and always came back with a great load, walking with her tall staff, and seeming so old and tired that she could never get up the hill ; yet every few days she went and came in the same manner. I remember too, that she took great quantities of Scotch snuff, and had three or four large cats, so that in old times she would certainly have been drowned for a witch.

From this old dame, as I grew bigger, I was transferred to a master—William Woodcock, more familiarly called Billy Bingo—a little jolly man, who united the two vocations of schoolmaster and baker, while his wife boiled toffy and barley-sugar for sale for the children. He was a very merry conceited little fellow, who thought these three pursuits particularly congenial, and often boasted that he nourished both body and mind, furnished both the staff of life and the staff of knowledge, and sweetened the passage of time too, with his barley-sugar, bull's-eyes and lollipops. He used to come whistling or humming a tune, hot out of his bakehouse, with his shirt sleeves rolled up to his shoulders, sit down at once to cool himself and hear our lessons ; and then having set us our copies, he strutted humming away again to set in his bread. A more contented creature never existed ;—to hear him talk, you would imagine he had educated all the great men in the country. Whenever he heard of any one doing anything clever, or growing in the world, he exclaimed, “O ! I laid the foundation of all that !” Of course, we all expected to become something very extraordinary under so illustrious a man, and to be as much in request when turned out of his hands as his

penny rolls, his buns, or his buttered Scotch ; but fate and Cousin John, cut all that short. As I approached the age of eleven, Cousin John became very diligent in asking for my copy-books every now and then, scanned the writing, did not think I much improved, asked me after my cyphering, was a good deal surprised that I was got no further ; and always ended by very loud and long praises of a certain great school at Ackworth in Yorkshire, where he had been not long before, to a general examination of the scholars, and came back brimful of it. As it was a school belonging to the Society of Friends, and one that my father and Cousin John were liberal contributors to, and had been for years, he did not see why my father should not have some benefit from it. It was for all, or any in the society ; for rich and poor—all were treated alike there ; and the non-sense about rank and money that got only too soon thrust into children's heads, never was heard of there. Besides that, there certainly never was such a school for laying a sound and thorough foundation in all the branches of English education, "and when that is done, Cousin Thomas, thou knows," said he, "thou canst top the lad up in Latin and Greek and such like, if thou thinks necessary, somewhere else."

The upshot of the business was, that I was duly entered on the rolls of the school, and exactly as I was eleven years of age, Cousin John had the unqualified satisfaction of conducting me thither.

I shall never forget that journey. After all the preparations for a long abode at a distance from home,—the making of new clothes—and the accumulation of linen, stockings, shoes, pencils, writing-paper, and I know not what,—then came the formidable business of collecting my tops, marbles, pop-guns, and all such of my portable play-

things as could be thrust within the limits of a trunk. There were my rabbits, pigeons, dog, etc., to be confided to the care of poor little Claude, with the zealously proffered assistance of Joe Garner, Cris Newton, Checky Pig, and others of my old cronies, and with reiterated injunctions to Samuel Davis to have an eye over them too. As the time drew near for this awful journey and separation, it began to be very affecting. Sundry times, when these poor lads, who now grew every day more and more assiduous in seeking my company, and I, were busy with these animals, or strolling in our old haunts, one or other began to wonder what sort of a place this was that I was going to, how long I was to be away, and how far it was off. All declared that if they could walk it in a week they would come and see me; and when it was asked how they were to live, "O! they would take a great crust of bread in their pockets, and when that was gone they could eat turnips and blackberries!" But when it was suggested that there was a great wall raised round the playgrounds, and great gates with a porter standing at them, that would not let either them come in or me come out, it struck all their speculations of a heap, and every now and then we have sate down in a corner of a field where we could not be seen, to cry a bit over it.

But the day came; and after I had gone through the arduous business of leave-taking in the house, I marched out to the door with a steady step, though blinded with my tears, and there beheld at once Cousin John mounted on my father's black blood mare, and Peter Scroggins standing ready for me, Samuel Davis holding the bridle, and at least a dozen of my poor cronies, all waiting to say "good-by" again. It was a serious business to get clear off; Cousin John saying, "Come, come! why there is as

much ado as if the lad was going to America." I tried to look brave; but when I just glanced aside, and saw my father, mother, little Claude, and the maid-servants, all standing at the windows, at once smiling and in tears; and then glanced along the little village street, and saw all the simple neighbours at their doors, ready to say "good-by" too; and William Woolley coming bustling up with his hand already stretched out for a parting shake, and saying, "God bless you, my lad, God bless you; be a good lad, it'll seem no time till you are back again!" it was too much; I was obliged to give Peter a lash with the whip and gallop off as fast as I could, or I should have cut a very poor figure indeed. I saw great big tears already dropping down Peter's mane, and felt such a swelling in my throat as could only be cured by a good loud sobbing, or by a desperate effort. Away then I galloped, and never stopped till I came to a steep hill a mile off. There I heard the hoofs of Cousin John's black mare tramping close behind me; and turning round caught his quiet smile, which seemed to say as clear as could be—"Well, it *was* rather a touching time, to be sure, but I must seem to think nothing of it." I had now recovered my composure. Cousin John looked very well, I thought, on the black blood mare, with his saddle-bags under him. It was a beautiful summer morning, and I began to like the thoughts of the journey. It was a two days' ride through a country and through towns that I had never seen, and they took my attention greatly; but there were one or two things in Cousin John's proceedings which made me believe that he was apprehensive that I might not like the strict discipline of the school, after my habits of ranging so freely as I had done over the fields, and was taking precautions to impede my offering to run away. I found afterwards

that he had not taken me the most direct and public way, but the most circuitous and intricate ; often through mere by-paths, and over heaths that would not be readily crossed again by a boy of my age. I believe too that he did not tell me the real name of a single town that we passed through. This I had reason to suspect the very first evening : as we passed through a considerable village as evening drew on, I said, "What place is this?" "This," said he, "is Overtown." Presently afterwards we came down into a valley, and entered a large busy town just as it grew dark : "And what place is this then?" I asked. "This," said he "is Nethertown." "Overtown and Nethertown," I thought, "what singular names." But unfortunately for Cousin John's precaution, just as we got down from our horses at the inn, out came the landlord, who, it seemed, knew Cousin John, and said, "How do you do? glad to see you in Rotherham again!"

"Why," said I, when we had got into the inn, where Cousin John ordered a private room, "why, this is Rotherham—and you told me it was Nethertown!" "Nethertown!" said he, "and so it is : the people call it Rotherham, but I call it Nethertown, and the other place Overtown,—for that is high enough above this, and this far enough below that."

Cousin John tried to laugh it off as a joke, but it did not take with me. I suspected his motive ; and therefore the next day, instead of asking him the name of a single place, I took care to inquire of the guide-posts, or if I saw anybody near the road I trotted Peter up to him and asked him ; or if I saw nobody, I said to Cousin John, "I suppose this is some Overtown or Nethertown or other," when he would smile, and say, "No, no, Will, this is such or such a place ;" but I never was sure that it was so. This

caution on my part only confirmed Cousin John in his notion that I was a sharp lad, as he was pleased to call me, and liked more liberty than was perhaps good for me. I might too be starting for home on some fancied grievance or other. As we drew near the end of our journey the next day, we found ourselves on a great lonely common, and as it was getting dark, he rode close alongside of my pony, and said, "Will, this is a notorious place for thieves, I think it would be safest if thou wast to let me take care of thy money till we get in." "O!" thought I, "my money—I see through it Cousin John—you want to know what I have got, and to give the superintendent a faithful account of it all (for all the lads' money in that school is put into the superintendent's hands, as treasurer for them), so that I may keep none in my pocket to help myself on occasion." So I said, "O dear, Cousin John, I think you had better let me take care of yours for you, for nobody will suspect such a little boy as I of having any money worth asking for; but they will go directly to you, and then if you had mine, you would lose it and your own too!"

Cousin John could not help laughing outright at this answer, but evidently was only more confirmed in his fears. However he said nothing more about the money, only breaking out into a fresh fit of laughter every now and then, which shewed that the answer had very much tickled him. Presently I saw a country lad approaching, and asked him how far it was to Ackworth, he answered in his Yorkshire dialect, "three moile;" and soon afterwards, passing over the brow of the hill, we could discern the large stone building through the dusk of the evening.

We went to the inn in the village for the night, and after breakfast next morning, we set out to walk up to the

school. As we drew near it, we overtook a poor man and his son. Cousin John asked the poor Friend, whether he was taking his boy to school. He said, "yes! and that they had come seventy miles to it on foot." As I have said, rich and poor alike belonging to the Society of Friends went there. If a man could not afford to send his children himself, the Society sent them for him. It had given this boy admission to the school, and his father, being a very worthy, honest man, though exceedingly poor, thought that if he could do nothing else to testify his gratitude, he could save the expense of his son being sent by coach, which the Society would otherwise have done. He therefore had set off with the lad on foot, to walk this seventy miles. He was a very thin delicate-looking man, in clothes that had evidently seen a good deal of service, but his son was a stout hardy-looking lad of about ten years old. The poor man had very little money to take him on his journey, but he told Cousin John that he had the names of several wealthy Friends who lived on the road given him, and when he came to any of their houses he had only to mention the names of the Friends that had told him of them, and he was sure of a hospitable welcome to bed and board. So he told Cousin John he and the lad had jogged on together, and had arrived in little more than two days. "And were you not very tired?" asked Cousin John. "Why rather," answered the poor man; "my son Joseph complained a good deal yesterday—so as I saw a man on the road with a timber dray, I asked him to let the lad ride a little, but the man said he would not let him ride under a quart of ale. I offered him a pint, but he persisted in saying, 'Nay, it must be a quart!' so as a quart seemed a deal, I declined, and the man went on. Presently, however, he stopped till we came up, and said it must be a quart, but that we

would all three join at drinking it. Upon this we consented, and we rode on for about four miles, but when we got down we were so stiff, and cold, and tired, that we repented that we had spent sixpence to so little purpose." I saw Cousin John look at the poor man very compassionately, and I believe he presently afterwards slipped something into his hand, for I heard the poor man say to him with evident surprise, "Nay, nay! I don't desire any such thing. I shall do very well when I have left the lad, and soon get back again." "Nonsense, nonsense!" said Cousin John, "if you can do well, is that any reason against your doing better?" "Well then," said the poor man, "I can only say, that I am very much obliged to thee."

Here we were arrived at the gates of the school. The poor man turned into the superintendent's office, and Cousin John went to inquire for the farmer with whom he was acquainted. Before, however, that I proceed with my own narrative, I must add that we saw the poor man going away again, and Cousin John said with great surprise, "What! are you leaving your son already?" "Yes!" said the poor man; "I am wanted at home; I am losing time, and it signifies nothing staying. I have turned the lad up amongst his schoolfellows, and he looked rather *scared*, to be sure, but he'll soon get over that." So wiping a tear away with the back of his hand that he would not have to be seen, he bid us good-by and turned away.

"There, you see, Will, what little ceremony a poor man is obliged to make. I know now that poor fellow's heart aches to leave his child in this sudden way; but, as he says, it does not signify; go he must. And for my part I am truly thankful that a poor man has such a place as this to

send his son to. I hope, Will, you will take a bit of notice of this lad sometimes."

I soon afterwards found that the lad did not need much notice, for he was a bold, hardy-spirited lad that could take care of himself, and there was no distinction between rich and poor within the bounds of that school.





CHAPTER XVI.

HERE then I was about to take *my* place in this great school; and though my introduction to it was very different to that of this poor lad, I was like him a little *scared*. The vast building, which, to my eyes, accustomed to the simple houses of villages, seemed a palace; the huge rooms, the long passages and halls; the vast number of boys, all at active play on the green—180 of them;—all was strange, and fell with a depressing weight on my spirit. Cousin John did everything to make it easy for me. He did not take me and turn me at once amongst the busy crowd of lads, but he went round and shewed me the whole place,—

the lads' gardens; the great garden of the school; the schools themselves; the dining-rooms, kitchens, farm-yard,—everything. He introduced me to the superintendent, the masters, nay, to the nurse and matron—to everybody that he thought might be a friend to me at one time or other; and it was not till bed-time that he took his leave. But, soften the thing as he might, the change from the endearments and comforts of home was striking and cheerless enough. A vast wide house, with long stone passages, large numbers of strange boys; a severe discipline; cold, hard beds at night; cold rising in the dark, early mornings; no hats allowed in the play-ground in winter—and the winters there were very sharp;—no approach to the fire on holiday afternoons till after dark-hour; and, on rainy days, our play-place an immense open shed, supported in front by Tuscan pillars, where, thrusting our hands into our bosoms, we used to huddle together by scores to keep one another warm—and happy was he that got deepest into the throng;—could anything be more comfortless!

It is, indeed, when the boy goes to school that he first begins to battle with the world,—that he first feels in what a fairyland of love he has been fostered—that he first finds the necessity of putting on some of that rough outside of silent defiance, and of knitting up his heart into the strength of fortitude, that will be so needful for him all his life afterwards; that he is in reality brought by the shock of circumstances to see and to observe the variety of character, the variety of motive, the springs of live and action—it is to him the clear dawn of the actual world.

I believe it is a feature of human nature, and therefore alike everywhere,—the repugnance to a new-comer—the desire to tease and tyrannize over him. It is an unaccountable part of the waywardness of our nature that such a

source of pleasure should exist in it; but it does, as most boys and girls know to their cost; and it is one, therefore, that particularly calls for teachers to discover and counteract and root out. When the superintendents of schools are snugly seated by their evening parlour fires, and the children are left to themselves, or only under the care of their monitors, what scenes of petty despotism are often going on; what ridicule, what satire, what malicious wagery are often afloat! In the new boy any singularity of speech, or dress, or personal appearance, is spied out and made the occasion of witty mischief. The very names of freshmen and fagging and new-fellows, that belong to our colleges and public schools, testify to this strange feeling. Cowper knew it to his cost, and many another spirit equally sensitive but not equally illustrious, and therefore unknown. Perhaps there must always be something of this in the best regulated establishments, and it may, in moderation, have no bad effect, but may tend to dissipate in a boy's mind undue notions of importance acquired in the exclusiveness of home—to nerve his heart and put him upon the exercise of his powers, both of endurance and observation; yet, blessed is he who labours to sow amongst his pupils affection and forbearance, and makes the entrance to his house pleasant to the gentle spirit.

My first trial of this sort was this:—There was a lad called Billy Bull, a long thin lad, with a smooth impudent face, and remarkably white hair. He soon discovered that I was very shy; for bold and affable as I had always felt myself in my own circle, here all was so strange to me that I for some time felt solitary, and even bashful; and it was his delight to come and stare silently in my face. Whenever he spied me alone he was sure to come running, and look stedfastly in my face, without a word, without

a smile. Turn whichever way I would, he turned too ; go where I would, he followed ; now he kept on this side, now on that ; now looked over my shoulder, and now came again directly in front. This he kept up for some weeks, and I was ashamed of complaining, or asking anybody to take my part. Sometimes he would encounter me in a narrow passage, and spite of all my remonstrances and endeavours to pass him, there he kept the way with this imperturbable and eternal stare. If I went to the boys' garden, Billy Bull started up from behind a bush ; if I retired to a solitary corner, he found me ; if I walked in the most public place, it was only the better to be seen by him. The persecution was become intolerable to me, and yet I blushed at the very idea of complaining to any one that Billy Bull looked into my face. If I told any of the boys, I expected they would laugh at me ; if I told a master, I expected all the school would laugh. But to me it was no laughing matter,—and when I saw Billy Bull coming I have often burst into tears of vexation, which seemed to produce no other change in his system of tormenting than an evident satisfaction in his large grey eyes.

But at length, the day of liberation came—the torment reached its acme—the spirit that never was quite asleep in me, started up in active indignation ; and as Billy Bull was one day gazing in my face, with his nose not many inches from mine, I raised my hand, and gave him such a thwack on the cheek as made the tears start into *his* eyes, and his face become one piece of crimson, in ludicrous contrast with his snow-white hair. He made no attempt at retaliation ; I left him to his reflections ; and from that day forwards Billy Bull left me to mine.

This incident passed, I found myself very comfortable. Amongst so many boys it was easy to find some of kindred

tastes. I began to be as fond of books, and the delightful knowledge they opened up to me, as I had been of birds'-nesting, and riding on asses and horses. A little knot of us were great gardeners. By the good-nature of some boy leaving the school, I was put into possession of one of the best gardens in that beautiful plot of gardens of which I have already spoken. Here, with the help of my young friends, I built a grand garden-house of mud, and made beautiful clatty sides to the garden. Here we sate, or rather lay, in the walk, on summer days, and told tales of our early days, before we came here. Here too we read, and discussed a deal of natural and moral philosophy,—for we had a good school library to go to, and had a great philosophical fit upon us. Here, too, we read and recited a vast deal of poetry, for poetry was in high estimation all through the school. We had Wiffen, the future translator of Tasso, amongst us; and I had the honour also to be considered a very promising poet of thirteen! Well, those were delightful days!—helping each other with our gardens—reading, and talking of all that we read, and at other times joining in all the active sports of the school. There was a famous troop of lads to engage in any play, and I have often seen the whole number—180—making one long line at leap-frog, or busy at prison-bars, or run-across, making a clamour and a hum that was heard a mile off. That run-across was a grand play. Across the middle of the green ran a paved walk; under the windows of the boys' dining-room was another; the space between these was occupied by one half the boys at play, whose business was to seize any of the others who attempted to run across. If the runners got across to the pavement under the windows they were safe, if they were caught and detained while the captor counted ten they were prisoners, and

were on parole under the dining-room till any other of their party running across could touch them, which gave them a right to attempt to run back again.

The apprentices, that is, young men who had been scholars in the school, but were now apprenticed as teachers, joined us, especially one named Richard Boxall. Boxall was an enthusiastic reader of Homer, and had diffused this Homeric admiration amongst us all. We were Greek and Trojan mad, and of course we divided our two bands in this game into Greeks and Trojans. We tucked up our coat laps under our coats, and buttoned our coats up so as to resemble close jackets, presenting as little as possible for anybody to get hold of; and it may be imagined with what ardour we played, till we were all as hot as Achilles ever was himself, when before the walls of Troy. Many a good coat and shirt collar have I seen wrenched away at one pull in that favourite game.

But one of the greatest treats which we got, was to go, a party of half-a-dozen of us, occasionally to help in the farm, to make hay, or reap corn. Cousin John had contrived that I should have the benefit of this occasional treat, for he had taken me to the worthy old farmer of the establishment, Samuel Goodwin, and said, "Friend Samuel, when you want a lad to make hay or reap corn, this is the man for you." Good old Samuel soon tried me, and was so well pleased with my accomplishments that he had me out on all possible occasions, and anybody may judge what a treat it was to me to get out of the bounds, which were never passed except on especial occasions, and to enjoy the green fields and all their favourite objects. The farm was large, for the establishment was large, having altogether not less than 350 people to support. There were twenty cows to supply milk, and everything in proportion. Sometimes we

were on the hills not far from the school, and at others a mile off, at what was called the low-farm. Here we helped to make hay, and to eat great hunches of bread and butter at lunch-time, and drink cans of beer, sitting on the green sward ; and, when we got a little opportunity, were very busy at the side of a clear shallow brook that ran through the meadows, looking after fish ; and in very hot weather have actually run up and down it with our shoes and stockings on, and thought it delightful. Nobody can tell how pleasant those times were, except boys like us that seldom got out of the dry play-grounds, and now could hear the hum of the boys there, and yet enjoy this silence and field liberty.

These things lead me back forcibly into the past, and bring before me vividly the characters and scenes of those school-days. I think there was more singularity of personal character in the school at that time than may occur again. We had children from all parts of the United Kingdom, from Guernsey, America, and Russia. The generation of lads which preceded us had been of a bold and insubordinate caste ; they seemed to us to have been “giants in the land,” and the traditions of their exploits were our themes of fear and wonder. They had elected a king—it was he who dared to climb the highest up a leaden spout in the corner of the pediment in the very centre of the main building, and there cut his initials—I observe they are there to this day. Under his orders they had committed many a daring transgression ; for he was absolute. They had planned schemes of escape and put their plans into execution, but always, with one solitary exception, were brought back again and punished—a result morally certain ; for, not being allowed to possess money, nor to wear hats, their appearance and purses were equally

hostile to long flight. Many a time has my indignation been roused by the recital of the treachery of an old Friend, who, beholding a troop of these bare-headed, moneyless, and foot-sore boys, passing through his town, had entrapped them by an invitation to dinner, in their case an irresistible bait, and then sent them back. Often, too, have I wept at the pathetic story of a poor lad, who, having reached the house of his companion, while he sate, on a fine summer day, with him and his mother, shelling peas in the garden, was pounced upon by the pursuer, and driven back like a stray sheep along the hot and dusty road—a long and weary way, and with a heart full of weary expectations.

Besides these serious attempts at running away, there were certain daring lads who made running off occasionally for a lark. Poor Wiffen I remember made one of them. The party was out two nights and a day, and could not be found, though they were never more than a mile off. It was a great amusement to hear them tell their schemes and “hair-breadth ‘scapes.” How they slept in a haystack round which the masters who were in quest of them went—how they heard all their cogitations and conjectures, and were nearly betrayed by one of the lads being taken with a disposition to laugh—how they came one of the nights and slept on the forms in the writing-school, through which the masters passed without seeing them, and how they agreed to surrender on the capture of any one lad—and were eventually seized in a turnip-field, supping on cold turnips; and very glad to be caught.

Our masters and officers were men of a day decidedly gone by—men of old-fashioned garments, and primitive lives and eccentric habits. There was William Sowerby, an old preacher—a man in a long homespun coat, but-

toned to the chin, who was in no office, but delighted to be there—a man of whom Crabbe might have said,

And never mortal left this world of sin
More like the being that he entered in:

a creature as tender and innocent as a lamb, who wandered about the house and schools, from place to place ; met us at coming out, dropped a word of advice to us, preached to us at meeting of “onions and garlic in the flesh-pots of Egypt,” and worked with us in the fields. The very gardeners, Matthew Doney and Tommy Briggs, were characters, and celebrated in a rhyme, which had assuredly very little in it but its sound, and yet was most wonderfully popular—

Billy Farden, in the garden,
Under the gooseberry tree—
Matthew Doney, on his Scotch pony,
Made Billy Farden flee.

Tommy Briggs, fishing for pigs,
Under a gooseberry tree—
Nanny Rhodes, fishing for toads,
In a dish of tea.

Nanny Rhodes was the laundress ; and Joey Crowther, the lamplighter and the prince of the washing-mill, a little broad-built man, the sound of whose wooden clogs is in my ears at this moment. He was a perfect humourist, and one of his stories I yet remember. It was of two of his village schoolfellows, whose names, in his Yorkshire dialect—Emonuel E-as-y and Johnny Lá-a-zy—we thought very remarkable. It was in vain that these heroes attempted to conquer the pronunciation of Nebuchadnezzar. In vain did master insist, and scholar toil at it, till one of them, I know not which, at the next recurrence of the hideous name burst out with great wrath, and much *naïveté*—

"Measter, this Neezer's cumd agé-an ; I know na what to may on him !"

The masters were strongly-marked characters. There was Master Joseph—properly Joseph Donbavon, the senior writing-master,—a tall, slender man, with a long, thin countenance, and dark hair combed backwards. What scholar that ever knew him does not remember the good-natured eccentricities of his character? Who does not remember his snuff-box, opened with its three systematic raps; and the peculiar jerk of his elbow when he felt himself bound to refuse some petition? He was a most perfect master of penmanship, and, in our opinion, not less of the art of swimming, which he often told us he had been taught by a frog, having one end of a string tied to its leg, and holding the other in his mouth, and thus pursuing it, and imitating its movements. It was his favourite humour to do a kind act with an air of severity. "Get away with thee," he exclaimed, with an emphatic elbow-jerk, to a very little boy sent to him to be caned; "thee be caned! why, thou art a coward—thou art afraid to go into the bath! Get away with thee!"

There was Thomas Bradshaw, the senior reading-master, a little, stiff man, with a round, well-fed face, and a very dry and sibilant voice. His hat was always three-cocked—his clothes always dark brown—his gaiters black. We looked upon him with awe, for he had been a naval captain, and had heard the roar of battle, as one of his legs testified, having had the calf blown away by a cannon shot. Worthy old man!—in our anger we called him *Tommy Codger*, and forgot the Pomfret cakes which he always carried in his waistcoat pocket, to bestow if he heard a cough—and heaven knows he heard many a one—as he went his evening rounds through the bed-chambers when on duty. At

the bottom of our souls, however, we loved him ; and he was more worthy of our love than we knew, for he had abandoned bright prospects in his profession and encountered, knowingly and undauntedly, scorn and poverty, from his conviction of the anti-christianity of war. He had suffered much ; and had we been aware of this, we might have borne with him more patiently when he grew old, and kept a great fire in the school-room all the summer, and sate close to it ; and still feeling himself chill, could not imagine but that we must be so too, and therefore broiled us, and kept close door and window, and made us button up our waistcoats to the throats, till we were ready to melt away. Many a time did we wish him a thousand miles off ; yet when he sunk under age and infirmities, and was obliged to vacate his office, he wept, and we wept too.

I must pass over Boxall, the chanter of Homer and Ossian ; and Stackhouse, the satirist and engraver on wood ; and Sams, who has since trod the deserts of Egypt, and explored Jerusalem for ancient mss. Excepting the good woman of toffee, and oranges, and liquorice, who still spreads her weekly temptations before the children, each of whom takes one pennyworth, the old have vanished in the grave, and the young are absorbed in the crowds of the world.

Ackworth school differs remarkably from all other public schools, in the complete isolation of the children. They have ample and airy playgrounds, but are as perfectly separated from the world as if they were not in it. Owen of Lanark himself could desire nothing more secluded. As no vacations are allowed, the children are often three or four years there, and during that time see nobody but the members of the family, or occasional visitors ; except in their monthly walk into the country, when they march

two by two, under the care of the teacher on duty, and can have no intercourse with any other children. It is impossible that evil communications from without can corrupt their good manners; and within, they are free from the distinctions of wealth and rank which torment the world, and excite many keen heartburnings in most public schools. There, not a sense of them exists. The utmost equality, the most cordial harmony prevail. One child is distinguished from another only by the difference of person, of talents, disposition, and proficiency in learning. Happy estate! admirable foundation for a noble and erect carriage; for establishing in the mind a habit of valuing men, not by wealth and artificial rank, but by the everlasting distinctions of virtue and talent.

Though the children are thrown entirely upon their own resources for amusement, these resources never fail. Besides ordinary plays, and means of play, there are their gardens; and a gardener and seedsmen attend in the spring, for every boy to lay in his stock of seeds and plants, which are paid for by the superintendent, their general treasurer. Then there is a flagged walk of some two or three yards wide, and reaching from the centre building to the garden, a considerable distance; a charmed promenade, marking the separation betwixt the boys' and girls' green; where relatives of each sex may meet and walk together, and where *only* they can meet for conversation, being kept as completely apart in the opposite wings of the building, as in two distinct establishments. It is beautiful to see brothers and sisters, and cousins (a relationship, I fancy, somewhat liberally rendered) there walking and talking, with linked arms, and words that never cease.

In winter, whenever a frost sets in, down this walk the lads pour water; and have, in a short space, a most glori-

ous slide, whereon one hundred and eighty of them driving impetuously, soon produce a scene of animated glee. The moment snow falls, they all set about treading it down, and speedily convert it into a broad surface of ice. There, with skates made of narrow strips of wood, they skim about with extraordinary celerity; and some, forming a team of boy-horses, imitate in imagination the Grecian heroes before Troy, in their rapid cars. Round the evening fires they tell tales and repeat verses, and in bed too; and I well remember that in one room, a room of more than twenty beds, Wiffen and myself alternately officiated as tale-makers.

What are all their within-bound enjoyments, however, to their monthly rural walks? To a stranger, nevertheless, in my time, they must have presented a most laughable spectacle on these expeditions. The bell rung, they ran to collect in the shed—they drew up in two long lines facing each other, perhaps two yards apart. Large wicker baskets were brought forth from the store-room, piled with hats of all imaginable shapes and species; for they were such as had been left by the boys from the commencement of the institution; they wear none, except on these excursions—and there they were, broad-brims, narrow-brims; brown, and black, and white; pudding-crowns, square-crowns, and even sugar-loaf-crowns, such as Guy Faux himself wore. These without ceremony were popped upon the heads of boys at random; little ones were left sticking on the very summit of great round-headed lads, ready to fall off at the first move, and great ones dropping over the noses of little ones. Away they went, however, as happy and picturesque as possible. And O! the pleasant memories I have of these excursions! The moving along green and bowery lanes, past cottages and cottage gardens; past

groups of villagers all radiant with smiles—and well might they smile, at our grotesque array; past great waters, and woods, and gentlemen's houses, to a common—such a common! It seems to me that is was boundless, and full of all sorts of pleasant and wonderful things. There, at the lifting of a hand, a shout broke out like the shout of an army; and we dispersed in every direction. There too, when it was time to return—a time, alas! that pounced upon us sadly too soon—a handkerchief hoisted on a pole, upon some eminence, a shout raised by a little group collected with some difficulty, became the signals of retreat; and every minute the group grew and grew, and every moment the shout swelled louder and louder; and parties of "hare-and-hounds" came panting up, all warmth and animation; and stragglers were seen toiling wearily from far-distant nooks; till the last, some embryo poet very likely, roused at the latest minute from some brook-side reverie, arriving, we marched homeward.

I remember a little incident that occurred on one of these excursions which excited a vast indignation amongst us at the time. One of the boys had armed himself with a bow and arrows, and when we arrived on the common began to shoot his arrows here and there. In his rambles, happening to come up to a farm-house on the edge of the common, he saw a dead goose lying in the farm-yard. The temptation was too strong to be resisted; so he let fly an arrow at the goose, and to the great delight of both himself and his companions, he hit it right in the body. They did not venture into the yard for the arrow, but went on their ramble round the common. What was the boys' astonishment however, the next morning, to hear an inquiry issued from the superintendent's office, for the boy who had been shooting with a bow and arrow on the

common the day before. As it was notorious that he was the boy, he obeyed the summons without hesitation ; but great was his amaze on entering the office, to see a sturdy farmer stand with the identical goose dangling in his hand, and the arrow dangling in its body.

“Didst thou shoot this goose?” asked the superintendent.

“I did shoot a goose,” replied the lad, “and that very probably may be it.”

“Ah! there, you see it’s a true bill, sir,—the lad did shoot it, just as I told you. There’s a good lad for speaking the truth ;” said the farmer.

“But how couldst thou think of killing the man’s goose?” asked the superintendent.

“I did not kill it,” said the boy.

“Hark you there!” cried the farmer, “now he is eating his words again.”

“Didst thou not say just now,” said the superintendent, “that thou *didst* shoot the goose?”

“Yes,” replied the lad, “but I did not *kill* it; for it was dead already, or I should never have thought of shooting at it.”

“O, come, come, young master,” said the farmer, “don’t come Yorkshire over us, for I’m Yorkshire myself. That won’t do. The goose was as live and well as myself yesterday morning ; one of our men saw some youngsters shooting their arrows about, and this goose was found with one in it—there it is—and I leave you to guess the rest.”

“O, it is only too readily guessed!” said the superintendent, very indignantly ; “the boy, I am grieved to say, has not only wantonly destroyed his neighbour’s goose, but told a lie. I am ashamed of him. What is the price of the goose?”

“Five shillings,” said the farmer.

"Then there it is," added the superintendent, handing him the money; "it must be charged to the boy."

It was in vain that the lad persisted—in vain that he begged that his companions might be called, a dozen at least of whom could testify that the goose was dead before he shot at it;—the superintendent, like too many good men, let his indignation and the suspicious appearance of the goose, get the better of his judgment; the poor lad could only protest that "he thought it very hard to pay five shillings *for shooting a dead goose!*" Great was the wrath of the lad—great the wrath of his companions—great that of the whole school; but there came their avengement. The next day the superintendent sent for the lad, and told him that he had now reason to believe that he had spoken the truth about the goose, that the man had imposed on them, and that he himself would pay the money. But great was the amusement of the whole school, when it came out, as it did, what his reason was for believing the boy:—the cook, on proceeding to dress the goose, found it smelt so bad that she declared it must have been dead a month; and she only wondered that the superintendent's nose had not told him that. From that day, to "pay five shillings for shooting a dead goose" became the phrase for an unjust sentence. And here I must record an unjust sentence passed upon myself.

WHAT CAME OF A PEEP INTO A CUPBOARD.

I suppose all lads are fond of plum-cake; and many mothers are fond of sending to them at school plum-cakes of such a dimension as more properly ought to style them plum-loaves. I know my mother was; but when they got there, another motherly old woman, called the matron, used to get hold of them, and lock them up in a

cupboard in her room. There duly at seven o'clock every evening came such lucky lads as had a cake, or the remains of a cake, in the cupboard, and departed each with a tolerable section of it in his hand.

Now, every winter evening the boys, each in their own school, used to sit round a good fire, and read or talk ; but there were a few that had won her good-will, who were invited to sit by the matron's fire, and I happened to be one of them. There was about half-a-dozen of us. It also happened that I had a plum-cake in the cupboard; and which was very uncommon, as we were sitting by the fire and the matron somewhere absent, a lad of the name of Goldsbury, sitting close to the large cupboard-door, discovered that it was not locked as usual,—nay, that it even stood a little ajar. As this famous cupboard was always the dépôt of sundry cakes, it was a matter of considerable curiosity, and Goldsbury, carefully drawing open the door about two inches, could not help exclaiming—"O my ! what a glorious lot of cakes ! And what a delicious smell ! I say, Middleton, I see thy cake too,—let us have a slice, won't thee?"

"O yes ! won't thee ? won't thee ?" cried out all the half-dozen eager lads.

"With all my heart," said I. So out came the cake, and instead of one slice, off went a slice a-piece ! The cake was really so good that it was considered almost impossible to put it into the cupboard again—without another little slice—and then it was found to be really such a very little bit, that it was thought best to eat it fairly up ! We ate it fairly up ! Matron and seven o'clock were totally forgotten ! and scarcely had the cake vanished when—bang ! went the bell of the great clock just over our heads—we heard the lads assembling at the door, ready to be called in—and in came the matron.

Here was a pretty predicament! We sate down in silence, and awfully awaited the event. The matron went to the cupboard, expressed a little surprise to find the door unlocked, but added, "you are trusty lads, I know, you would not meddle with the cakes." So out she drew the cakes, and setting them on the table, began to cut away. "Here, William Middleton," said she, "here is thy cake, so I may as well give it thee at once."

The lads all looked in silent amaze,—for truly she gave me a slice of a cake which seemed the very fellow to the one so lately devoured. I saw they smiled significantly to each other, and I knew their thoughts, which were, that I had two cakes, and so the fate of the other might not be detected after all. But I knew better. I knew the history of that cake, and I was sure trouble would come of it. I therefore held the slice of cake quietly in my hand instead of attempting to eat it. After the matron had served all the rest of the lads, in came a little, thin lad, that seemed as if he might have eaten all the cakes together, and been no better for it.

"Eh! Richard!" said the matron, on seeing him, "I had forgotten thee, and where, indeed, is thy cake?" She looked on the table—it was not there; into the cupboard—it was not there! she gave a look of blank amaze—and the lads sate as still as mice, looking as blank as she did.

"How *can* it be?" again said the poor matron—once more examining both table and cupboard—"Such a thing never did happen to me yet! Can it really be," said she, in a pondering and dubious manner, "can it really be, that you boys have taken advantage of the cupboard-door being open, and so have taken this poor fellow's cake? Why, it would be a wicked thing; for he is a poor orphan, and it is the only cake he ever had since he came to school. But

it must be so,—some of you must have been base enough to abuse my good-nature, and do so wicked a thing."

We were all silent; for we had not resolution to avow our mistake—for mistake it now appeared plainly enough—we had eaten the poor lad's cake, supposing it to be mine!

"But how could you be so stupid," I hear some one say, "as not to know your own cake?" I will tell you. Both of the cakes, the poor orphan Richard's and mine, were made by my mother. They were of the same material, the same size, and the same exact appearance. My mother was that good Samaritan, that she never came to see me without finding out the youngest, the gentlest, and the most unfortunate children in the school; and besides always enjoining it upon me to be kind to them, was sure to leave or send some token of her sympathy to them. This poor lad was one of her latest discoveries, and so, in sending me a cake, she also sent him one exactly like mine; and whether we had actually eaten his cake or mine, is more than I can tell—but I had got the credit of the one left, and there stood the poor orphan Richard without his cake, and with tears in his eyes!

"Never mind Richard," said I, going up to him, "take my slice; I really don't want it (which, as the reader may suppose, was a fact); take it, and the remainder of the cake too; I won't have a bit more of it;—thou art as welcome to it as flowers are in May!"

Richard thanked me, and left the room.

"Well, that is generous," said the matron; "but still it does not clear up this matter; I must know which is the thief that I have been harbouring in my room. Now, which ever of you it is, speak out, and don't let it lie on the rest."

Nobody spoke.

"Will nobody confess?" said the matron, and she ques-

tioned us all round. Now was the time to explain the whole affair, and there is no doubt that the matron would have soon forgiven us. But I could not tell how the mistake arose without implicating Goldsbury as the peeper into the cupboard and the proposer of the deed,—and the rest did not understand the history of the two cakes. So we preserved a stubborn silence. It would have served us all right to have banished us in a mass from her room, but she was curiously bent on discovering who was guilty and who was not. For this purpose she resorted to a species of ordeal. She produced a large Bible and a key, and, opening the Bible at some particular place, she laid the key upon it. She then made us all stand in a row, and gave the Bible, with the key lying upon it, to each in succession. As the boy held the Bible she repeated the verse on which the key lay, and we were informed that when it came to the guilty boy's turn, as she repeated the verse, the key would turn round. If the ordeal had been effectual, the key ought to have spun round at every one of us; but we were too much committed now to flinch, and every one held the Bible as steadily as possible; and the key was still as a stone!

As this was the case, the worthy matron began to think that she had accused us wrongfully, and that somebody must have been into the room during her absence! But then, to think that there was a thief in the establishment at all! it was grievous indeed to her.

Here the matter might have ended, but some of the lads thought the ordeal of the Bible and key so droll that they could not help talking of it. From the lads it got to the apprentices, from the apprentices to the masters, and the consequence was a summons of our whole half-dozen of cake-eaters to their presence in the library. Here the

question was put to us, point blank, which of us had taken the cake out of the cupboard. Nobody answered; whereupon I at once told the whole story as it had occurred, adding, that I had given up the other cake to the boy Richard, and that he was quite satisfied. But if he was quite satisfied, I did not find the masters so easily satisfied. They went on to ask question upon question, till my indignation being roused, I bluntly replied, "That I had told them the truth, as the rest of the boys knew; that they appeared very desirous of making me tell a falsehood, but that I would not, and therefore I would not say another word."

Hereupon the whole conclave expressed one common horror of my insolence, and bade us depart for the present. Some days after we were again called up, and informed by Master Joseph, whom alone we found in the library, that all the boys except me were to be let off with a warning,—I was to be caned—*for want of respect to the masters!* and that I must make reparation to the boy Richard.

If I was indignant before, I was tenfold so now. I declared in a firm tone,—"that I was no more guilty than the rest; that the whole was a plain mistake; and that I had already said, as plainly as I could speak, that the boy Richard had had another cake for the one eaten!"

Master Joseph, who was a right worthy fellow, and with more sense than all the rest of them, said, looking kindly at me, "O! is that the case, indeed? Well then, we'll make light work of it! Hold out thy hand." So I held out my hands, first one and then the other, and he just touched them with the tip of his cane, and said, "There, I think thou art not much the worse for that!" We all smiled, and went away,—my heart ten times more eased by the feeling that Master Joseph did me justice than by the punishment being turned into a mere form.

AN ACTUAL CULPRIT.

A real thief appeared in that primitive and conscientious establishment. The whole school was thrown into amazement. Such had always been the sense of security, that all the boys' boxes, containing their playthings and books, stood on a bench under an open shed, and many of them totally unlocked; and for twenty years not a thing had been missed under suspicious circumstances. But this was so no longer. First one boy and then another missed knives, silver pencil-cases, and such things. There was a great outcry about it; but the spoliation did not cease: on the contrary, it became more general and more wholesale. Every night a whole host of things disappeared. Every morning the boys got up at the first sound of the bell, and hurried down stairs, and into the shed, to see what was afresh gone. And as new and extensive losses were discovered, great were the wonderings and the consternation. Besides that it was an unknown thing for any boy in that institution to be guilty of theft, it was thought that no lad would be daring and hardened enough to continue his marauding in the face of all this stir. Besides, when could any boy do it? All went to bed at the same time; all had their names called over, and none could get out after that time—and all rose at the same hour—yet the depredations were evidently committed between their retiring and returning the next morning.

The wonder and the robbery still went on for some time. It was deemed almost certain that the thief or thieves came out of the village—and yet a watch was set and could see nobody, though the theft was as rife as ever. One lad, indeed, who was very active—Jemmy Ward by name, a rough Lancashire lad, with a strong dialect—declared one morning that he saw “a man peup o'er yon wa’!” but

nobody else saw it; and it was not long before this lad began himself to be suspected. It was remarked that he had from the very beginning of the alarms been one of the very foremost in the attempts at discovering fresh thefts, and in zeal in planning the detection of the unknown robber. All his suggestions, however, it was noticed, directed the attention of the boys to some one from without. It was seen that he was by much the first to get down into the shed-court. It became obvious soon, that he actually contrived to nearly dress himself in bed before the bell rung, so that at its first clink out he jumped, and was down and out before other lads had their stockings on. This roused suspicion, and his plan was adopted by some of the most active of the lads. They too dressed in bed, and were out as soon as he was. They noticed how he ran to the boxes; how eagerly and freely he opened any lad's box he came to, and tumbled over their things. A close eye was kept on him, and it was not long before the boys determined to search his garden-house, when lo! in a sort of little cellar under it, was found a whole treasury of knives, combs, pencils, pencil-cases, tops, marbles, all sorts of things that boys love. The secret once brought to light, the pursuit was followed up with indefatigable ardour. Every imaginable place was hunted, and at least half-a-dozen other dépôts were found, most of them scooped in the side of the haw-haw, or sunk-fence, at the bottom of the Green. Nothing but the strongest propensity to steal could have led this lad to the active pains that he must have used, in the very face of all the outcry on the subject, to take what did not belong to him, and what during his stay in the school he could not for a moment use without detection. What a day was that in that strictly moral school! All the pilfered articles were spread out upon a large table, and the

whole body of lads marched past one by one and appropriated whatever belonged to him. That they had discovered Jemmy's whole hoard was pretty evident, from the fact that every boy got all that he missed back again, and that after every one had done that, there still remained about a score of articles unclaimed, which either belonged to the culprit himself, or to boys who had left the school before the discovery.

And what became of this juvenile thief? It was thought best to request his friends to fetch him away; and it was done. The other day I, by accident, learned his subsequent history. The affair was kept secret by his friends, and every opportunity given him of re-establishing his character; but the propensity seemed invincible. At length his friends gave him up; he became a butcher by trade, and was actually hanged in his native county, for sheep-stealing!

Such was one of the last events during my stay at that school—and it is one in fearful conformity with a certain modern philosophy. Soon after this I returned home, and the next stage in my school-days will be learned in the following chapter.





CHAPTER XVII.

A SUMMER-DAY'S ADVENTURE OF THREE SCHOOL-BOYS.

IT is above twenty years ago, yet I remember as clearly as though it were present at this moment, the bright June morning that myself and two other boys, Ned Tunstal and Harry Webb, sate at the writing-desk in our school-room. I remember how the sunshine came streaming over that old hacked and ink-stained desk, bearing the initials cut with the penknives, and traces of idle mischief left there by a long train of our predecessors. I remember how the cheerful light made us look up, and how bright and blue and transparent the sky appeared through the open window;

and what sounds of birds, and what fresh, rural odours came pouring in from the fields that lay before the house ; and I remember how Ned Tunstal turned his strong, ruddy features towards us; and with sparkling eyes exclaimed, for both master and scholars, ourselves excepted—were yet absent, “O what a day would this be for Spidenloft Chapel !”

At the name of Spidenloft Chapel, both Harry Webb and myself sprung up, as struck with a spell of stirring delight; and both together cried, “ What a day ! Ned ! Ned ! would that we were but there !”

Now, whoever you are that are conning this page, know that we three boys were the pupils of the Vicar of Haysford ; and that Harry Webb, indeed, was his son. We were part of about a dozen, the sons of the most substantial of his parishioners, on whom the worthy Vicar, whose income was not large, bestowed his leisure. Ned Tunstal was the son of a farmer who lived not less than two miles distant; and this Spidenloft Chapel lay about five other miles beyond their farm. Ned was a lad of about twelve years old, but who, from his robust make, and strong, hardy features, might be supposed to be some years older. His body and soul seemed full of rude strength and healthy energies. At the table, and in the playground, he acted his part manfully. He was daring, obstreperous, overbearing ; leaped, wrestled, swam, flew over hedge and ditch with the ranty-pole, with a vigour and a gusto that filled us all with wonder; and had a kind of coarse, homely, and confidential sort of eloquence all about dogs, cats, rabbits, shooting of pigeons, the pleasures of birds'-nesting, and weasel-hunting with his rough grey terrier Snap ; and painted his strolls through the wild woods, and by the solitary ponds and brooks, and in the fields about his home,

abounding with all manner of otters, and badgers, and polecats, and hawks, and jays, and I know not what curious creatures, in such a fresh and taking fashion, that he was the great oracle of the school about all rural wonders; and we listened to him till our heads were turned, and filled with all manner of schemes of country adventure.

Of this Spidenloft he had repeatedly talked, till we were on fire to visit it. It was the ruin of an old chapel, lying in a deep and solitary valley. According to him, it was a place not to be approached for the world by night, being haunted by a variety of strange ghosts; and notorious as the spot of more than one murder and awful circumstance; but by daylight, and in summer, by his description, it was a perfect paradise for boys. In its ruins there were polecats; amongst its old mossy trees, built birds of the rarest kinds. There were jays'-nests; there were wrynecks and starlings' nests; there the featherpoke built its beautiful little covered abodes; there were even to be found cuckoos' eggs; and there, in the loft of the old chapel, were abundance of owls.

Was there a boy who could hear of such a place as this, and not long to away to it? We had listened so often to its marvels, that now, at the very mention of it, we sprang up and cried: "What a place! and what weather! Ned, Ned! what shall we do?"

"I know!" said Ned, springing up on the opposite side of the desk, and leaning over towards us with a face of great importance, "I know; it is fine to-day, but it will be fine to-morrow. The weather will be settled for some time. Our shepherd says so, and he knows; and to-morrow is Thursday, and we have a half-holiday. It is only asking leave for you to go and see me, and it is done."

"Ay, ay!" we both cried, "that would be famous; but will Mr. Webb let us go?"

"Leave that to me; I'll plan it. I'll say my father and mother wish you to go and see me for a whole day, and so they do, and they've often said so; and then I know Mr. Webb won't refuse us. We'll do it, my boys, we'll do it!" And at the very thought of it we drummed upon the desk with our hands, and danced about till we upset the benches behind us, till the clamour aroused our reverend preceptor from his elbow chair, and we heard the house-door open, and had only time to raise up the fallen benches, and resume our demure looks and our seats, ere he came in.

I need not say in what manner we pursued our studies that day: our heads were running the whole of it on Spindenloft, and owls'-nests, and cuckoos' eggs, and such precious treasures; and if we escaped notice and correction, it was only because Mr. Webb was absent the chief part of the time at a wedding, or a funeral. When school broke up, Ned Tunstal approached with his hat in his hand, and with one of his best bows, made known his petition to Mr. Webb in the name of his parents. For a while the good man looked gravely on the matter, and our hearts, already full of anxious fear, sunk low; but when he had interrogated Ned on a few particulars, he looked out and said, "Well, to be sure, the weather is very fine, I really think it will do you good, so I shall not say nay, provided Master Middleton's parents are agreeable; but mind you keep out of mischief, and return in good time;" looking at us as he concluded. Of course we promised most liberally, and walked out very quietly till a certain distance and the shelter of a neighbouring barn side allowed us to let out the pent-up vastness of happiness in a simultaneous dance, and shout, and clapping of hands.

It was no difficult matter for me to procure permission from my parents for the visit to Ned, when they knew that Harry Webb was going by leave of his father, and with the understanding that it was at the desire of Ned's parents; but it was not so easy a matter to appease my conscience in the affair. I would fain have satisfied it with asserting internally that Ned's parents did wish us to go, for he had often told us so; but my conscience, a thing not only very tender of itself in early youth, but which had been tenderly dealt with by my parents, shewed me as plainly as could be, that there were baseness and deception in the whole mode of getting leave for this visit. It cried loudly, "When—when did Ned's parents ask you? If ever, surely not *just now*. And yet this you would have your parents and your master to believe, though you don't exactly say it. Besides, the visit is pretendedly to the house of Ned's parents, but in reality to Spidenloft. O, sad, sad affair!" I winked hard at this clear demonstration, and stopped my ears at the cries of conscience, but it was vain; it poured into my heart a sense of evil and condemnation, and then was still.

But the morning rose—I awoke; and the glorious radiance of the summer sun gushed through my window, and upon my bed. I jumped up; my first feeling was attended by a sigh and a sense of heart-soreness, in the remembrance of my participation in evil and deceit; but when I glanced abroad, and saw the glory and beauty of the morning—saw wide fields lie all smoking in the sun—saw the trees and hedges waving in the light breeze—saw the clear sky, and heard the birds singing rapturously all around, my transport in the prospect of the day before us quenched the sense of compunctionous sadness, and I rushed down stairs, devoured my breakfast, and hurried off to

meet Harry Webb. Harry was as full of animation as myself; but when I looked on his pale, delicate features, and slender person, I fancied that I could trace in him feelings of a wounded conscience like my own; for Harry Webb was a boy of a tender, gentle, and timid disposition, who was easily led into scrapes, but who was as easily alarmed both at danger and at evil; but of these things we said nothing, but went on in the direction of Ned Tunstal's home.

If ever there was a day of splendour and rejoicing beauty, it was that day. It was towards the latter end of June; the foliage was in its utmost luxuriance; the sky was of one fine transparent azure; the fields were full of flowery and odorous grass ready for the scythe; the wild rose and the elder-flower waved in the breezy hedge-rows, and flung their fragrance far and wide; the lark was rejoicing in the air; the cuckoo floated from place to place, with its deepest and mellowest voice; the grasshopper raised its shivering note in the turf at our feet, and a thousand insects hummed and wavered around—a thousand creatures uttered voices of delight.

He that knows—and who does not know?—how full of gladness, and beauty, and wonder, all creation is to the heart of childhood—how entirely and intensely it lives in the present; having no habitual acquaintance with fear, or calculations of coming weariness, and of the fleet passing of our enjoyments—but spreads its whole heart and hope over the whole fairyland horizon that it embraces—may judge with what exultation we turned from the dusty road, and scoured along the footpath, through delicious fields, towards the abode of Ned: here running into the mowing-grass waist high to where we beheld some lark arise or fall, in the hope of finding its nest; here peeping into bank and

bush; here leaping along, singing some school-boy chant, for the easing of our pleasure-laden hearts.

We soon espied Ned seated on a gate, looking out for us; and the moment he saw us he leaped down and came running to meet us, with his grey terrier at his heels. And now all three set forth in the direction of Spidenloft, forgetful of our consciences, if indeed Ned had felt any trouble of that kind; happy as any other creatures on earth. A feeling of perfect liberty; a whole summer-day before us—that mighty portion of existence in the estimation of youth—the luxurious influence of summer-tide nature breathing upon us, and objects of engrossing interest in view, we went on looking, laughing, and wondering. The space we moved over, that of five miles, is to a man a mere nothing, but to a boy it is a journey of mighty magnitude, and filled with images that will never be forgotten. As the country still lives in my memory, it seems one of wonderful beauty. Ned Tunstal appeared the most knowing of mortals; and now, indeed, he began to shew us exploits that proved that he had not talked in vain. We heard his dog loudly barking, and running rapidly to the place, beheld him shaking furiously a large snake, which as it writhed about in his jaws, sent forth a most pungent and serpent-like odour. The dog speedily killed it, and as we had time fully to admire its green and black-striped body, Ned drew forth his knife, stripped off its skin, and held it up to our admiring eyes, a most beautiful, variegated ribbon. But this was not all; he cut open its stomach—displayed to our astonishment a large toad, which it had swallowed whole. Filled with marvel at these, to us new and strange facts, we went on, Ned having risen very high in our estimation; but in the next moment we again heard the barking of the dog, and running to him, we found him rolling about a prickly

ball, nearly as large as one of our heads, which he had found in a heap of dry leaves, in the hedge-bottom; and with delight Ned exclaimed, "a hedgehog! a hedgehog!" Shall my dog kill it?" he cried. "It is not every dog that can do such a feat; but let him alone a moment, and you will see!" "No, no!" we cried, "let the poor thing live." "Very well," said Ned; and calling his dog away, we went and stood at some distance, and to our wonder and delight, soon saw the prickly ball cautiously unroll itself, gradually put forth a black snout, and four black shining legs, and scamper away into the hedge.

While we were full of this scene, suddenly there came sweeping round us birds with large whistling wings, and shrill, wild cries. Now, they rose into the air with a wavering flight, and sometimes pitching downwards, sometimes sweeping upwards, wheeling here and there, they seemed speeding far from us, when again they would come as rapidly back, and din us with their melancholy lamentations. Now they dashed close past us, with loud, long-drawn shrieks and too-whoos, and exhibited the utmost passion of anxiety and grief. "Let us look well here," said Ned; "the eggs or young of these pewits are not far off;" and in fact, he instantly stopped, called us to him, and pointed to the sward of bare pasture before us. We could see some dark-looking things, as it were lumps of brown clay lying, and we said, "What of these?" "They are young pewits, to be sure," he said; and although they lay as motionless as inanimate clods, he put them into an empty blackbird's nest, and began to march off with them. To convince us that they were not really dead, however, he soon put them down again, and we retired to some distance from them, when they soon exhibited every sign of life, and, getting out of the nest, began to make their escape.

We carried them off in our joy, for the eager desire of boys is reckless; and we went from brook to brook, and from copse to copse, still finding new treasures for our insatiable hands. The lark, the wood-pigeon, and a hundred other birds yielded up their eggs, till the large nest of a blackbird and one of a thrush were filled.

Somewhat satiated with our success, we now began to look about, and truly we were in a beautiful and solitary land. No house was to be seen, except a lone farm-house or two in the very distance of the valleys, that broke and sunk away pleasantly from the airy height on which we stood. Close on our right hand stretched far away great woods of mighty trees, amongst whose boles flourished a thick underwood of holly, yew, and box, and other evergreens, of such towering and luxuriant size as shewed that they were the growth of many years. Anon, we came upon a wide and ancient gateway, that seemed to lead to some old mansion in the woods; and on each massy pillar of the gates stood, in stone, a dragon, the crest of the family to whom the estate belonged, but which filled our eyes with wonder, and our minds with many awful ideas of an enchanted domain.

But Ned drew us away towards the object of our expedition. We now saw below us a valley of long and steep descent, in which a small brook supplied a succession of large fish-ponds, whose shaggy sides of reeds, and thickets of ancient thorn, scattered along their southern margin, and large trees growing around them, hung with drapery of most luxuriant ivy, testified that they were of great antiquity. Indeed, the whole valley had an air of loneliness and picturesque ruggedness, that to my present mind made it seem well fitted for the abode of fauns and satyrs, and the great god Pan. We trod the brink of this chain

of deep, dark waters with awed steps—startled at the very leaping of a solitary fish, and listened solemnly to Tunstal's talk of otters that lurked in the thick mass of flags and reeds.

But, behold! in the depth of the vales Spidenloft appeared. It was a ruin that lifted one grey tower high in the midst of a most ancient-looking, scattered company of large, grey, twisted thorns, low-spreading, mossy maples, yews and crab-trees, on which last grew enormous bushes of the golden mistletoe. Large stones, and huge dislocated masses of masonry shewed what had formerly been the extent of the building; and a flock of jackdaws and starlings, that flew chattering about the tower, and went in and out of various holes and brier-hung windows, only made the solitude more sensibly felt.

Ned marched eagerly on towards it, but we followed with silent steps, till the running of a ruddy weasel across our path, and the dashing of a cushat from an ivied thorn, awoke our boyish eagerness of curiosity. We sprang on, and were soon in the midst of most interesting discoveries of eggs of missel-thrushes, red-starts, wood-pigeons, and red-linnets.

But the ruined chapel was the object of intensest interest. It was not for its antiquity, nor its architecture, nor the memory of those that slept beneath it, that we regarded it; but for those owls and other strange creatures, that we imagined to inhabit its old tower. We beheld the doves and starlings going in and out, and the black swifts screaming around it; and longed with a fearful longing to peep into that dark upper story of the tower. But how to get there? It was a considerable height; the walls were ruinous and broken, and presented no apparent means of access. Ned, however, with the true adroitness of a school-boy,

flung off his coat, and dashing amongst the green wilderness of mallows and nightshade that grew at his feet, began to insert his fingers and toes into the joints of the masonry, and to ascend in much the same apparent manner that a fly creeps up a pane of glass. We shuddered as we stood below, and saw him hanging some forty feet above our heads, where there seemed nothing to support him; and where what, indeed, did support him, was continually crumbling beneath his pressure, and falling pattering at our feet. But in a few seconds, he was at the little Gothic belfry-window, and with a shout of triumph crept in, and disappeared. In the next moment he put forth his head, all covered with cobwebs, and cried, "Up, my boys, up! if you would see a sight worth seeing!"

The summons was so animating, that, in spite of my former fears, I sprang to the wall, and ascended as he had done; poor Webb dared not attempt it. When I entered the dark place, I was actually in a fright of astonishment. I had heard of dark caverns, and halls lighted with carbuncles, and truly it seemed as if this place were illuminated in the same way: for I beheld on all sides, round and yellow fires that glowed most awfully. They were the eyes of owls; and such a hissing, and flustering, and snapping of angry bills was there, as was wonderful.

"Here they are! here they are!" cried Tunstal exultingly, bringing two young full-fledged owls to the light, "will you have any more?" But as he spoke, the old ones above our heads seemed filled with a raging fury, and dashed and darted about us in a terrible manner; and one flew into Ned's face with such a fell snap, as seemed actually intended to take off his nose. Tunstal cried out, and clapped his hand to his cheek, and immediately I saw the blood streaming down his face. He flung the young

owls out of the window, and pulling off his hat, stood with a look of desperate wrath to knock down his foe. For my part, I was glad to be gone ; and issuing from the window, descended with much difficulty and danger. I found Harry Webb below in ecstasies, with the young owls under his hat, which, whenever it was lifted up, hissed and snapped most bravely. Tunstal soon followed, with his face all bloody, and we found that the old owl had really snapped a piece out of his cheek. According to the best practice of boy-surgery, we staunched the blood with some fur from one of our hats ; and with our hands full of prey, began our return. Tunstal had the owls, Webb two nests full of eggs, and I a blackbird's-nest with the young pewits in it.

We ascended a good way up the valley, full of our captures and adventures, and talking loudly of them, when Tunstal's dog put up a corncrake in a field of mowing grass, and the temptation to run this bird down, which Tunstal declared his dog could do, was too strong to be resisted. Therefore, notwithstanding that we began to be very hungry, and somewhat tired, away we ran into the very midst of the deep grass, never for a moment reflecting that we were doing infinite mischief. We were soon in high pursuit ; and now heard the bird cry *crake, crake*, just by us, now saw it rise before the dog, and fly a short distance, and then drop again, when Tunstal suddenly turning his head, became as suddenly pale, and with his usual exclamation, "By Jove!" took to his heels at an amazing rate. We also looked round, and beheld a great country fellow coming down the field in full, but silent, chase of us. At the sight, Webb gave a wild cry, and, with his usual terror, flung down his nests of eggs and ran for his life. I ran too, you may be sure ; and the moment the clown perceived that we were aware of him he sent

after us a halloo so terrible, that it made us leap as though we had been shot, and fly on with all the speed that was in us. Tunstal was already at the end of the field, and at one spring crashed through the hedge; Webb, who was a little lower down, also making for the hedge, most unfortunately betrayed by a covering of tall green grass, plunged into a bog, and sinking to the middle, set up the most pitiful cry of terror and despair imaginable. Such was my feeling for him, on discovering his situation, that although the monstrous man was behind me, I could not help standing for a moment, and shouting, "for your life, Harry, dash on, dash on!" He made a desperate effort, the bog was not wide, and he cleared it and the hedge almost in the same moment. We flew along the next field with breathless speed; and whether the countryman lost sight of us I know not, but we soon found ourselves out of sight of him, nor did we again behold him till we reached the top of the hill, where we found Tunstal panting and covered with perspiration, but stationed behind a tall furze-bush, and peeping over it at the enemy, who appeared to be slyly taking a direction to surprise us, and we again bounded away. It was not till we had gained a distance to which we did not suppose he would pursue us, that we lay down on the grass and endeavoured to recover our breath. Here we discovered that Tunstal in his flight had kept firm hold of his owls—so firm that he had actually strangled them, and held them unconsciously dead in his hands. I glanced at the nest in mine; it was there, but the pewits had been shaken out, and were lost; and when I recollect that they must certainly perish, I know not that I ever felt a keener sense of remorse, except it was when I had put a whole company of poor field-mice into a drawer, and forgot them, and a fortnight afterwards

opening it by accident, saw that there had been a tragic scene more horrible than can well be conceived. The poor creatures had been driven by famine to attack and devour one another; and one large, solitary mouse, which had survived all the dreadful contests, the last conqueror, sate, a melancholy object, in the midst of the bones of his fellows, and in the last stage of exhaustion!

Saddened by our disasters; saddened tenfold more by our sense of the fate of the pewits—in our weariness, and abatement of our enthusiasm, our consciences again spoke out, and we went sadly and silently along. We were now by the side of the great wood that we had seen in the morning; and it seemed that we were yet to have a fresh misfortune, for the dog, who was hunting sharply about in the wood, and would not obey Tunstal's calls, became a great trouble to us; and anon, we heard the thunder of a pheasant's uprising near us, followed by the eager barking of the dog. Tunstal sprung over the pales, and cried out, "see, see!" We climbed over after him, and behold! there was a pheasant's nest, and at least a dozen eggs. "There is a prize!" cried Tunstal; we will take these, and put them under a hen." "But," said I, "wont it be poaching?" "O, ay," said he briskly, placing them in the crown of his hat, "you may poach some of them if you like, and no doubt they will be good too;" and then he laughed at his wit. In the very midst of his laughter, however, we heard a branch crack behind us, and turning round, beheld a tall gentleman stand gazing intently and silently at us. At the sight, we once more sprung away through the wood, while we heard the gentleman crying, "stand there, stand there!"—but who would stand while he could run? We soon burst into a sort of open paddock, and flew across it without knowing whither it would lead

us. The sound of the gentleman's dog-whistle, ever and anon, reaching our ears, filled us with terror, and augmented our speed. Tunstal and Webb clambered over a gate at the other end of the paddock; but I bounded through a gap, and found myself in a garden, in which stood a cottage. To my infinite terror, I also saw a little stout man in the garden, who observed me, and called out in a hoarse voice, "Stop! I know you, I know you!" He might as well have called to the sun to stop. I was in an agony of desperation: the fear of apprehension, of disgrace, of appearing before magistrates, and of punishment, of I knew not what degrading kind, lashed me to madness. I flew through the garden half blind, and this moment found myself in a border recently sown, probably with some onion seed, for it was all planted with waving peacock feathers to frighten away the birds, and the next in a large bed of cucumbers, amongst glasses which flew before my feet into shivers. I was now at the very door of the cottage, when I discovered a little gate, through which I sprang, and in the same moment regained the view of my fellow fugitives, now about to enter a distant copse. I followed, entered, and soon overtook them.

We ran along a riding for, at least, half a mile; when finding no pursuit, we again flung ourselves down, overcome with fatigue, terror, and despair. We lay long and in silence, save that Webb and myself uttered manifold groans; but Tunstal lay with his face on the ground, in a sort of motionless sullenness. The dreary shades of evening were falling around us; and Webb began to cry, "O dear! how shall we again find our way home?" As he said this Tunstal sprung up, and began to look around him, as if endeavouring to reconnoitre our situation. As he moved a little from us, he suddenly struck his foot against some-

thing, and looking down, said—"what is here?" We sprung up, and looked at the place, and beheld a hooked stake driven into the ground, and a strong iron chain fastened to it. "What in the name of wonder is this?" said Tunstal, and began to trace the chain by throwing off the moss and leaves that covered it. We stood close, and anxiously watching him—when shall I ever forget the horror of that moment! There was a motion and a shudder beneath our feet, as if we had trod on some living thing, and instantly an iron-clang, and a shriek from Webb, and we saw him stand in the fangs of a monstrous steel-trap.

We were rooted to the ground with horror; but the groans and death-like countenance of poor Webb recalled us to action; we gazed on the terrible machine, to see if its awful iron teeth, of which we had often heard, had actually transpierced the poor fellow's thighs—and found to our great relief that it had no teeth at all; but was so constructed as to hold, without vitally injuring the limbs, and yet with a dreadful pressure and agony. For my part, I began to pull at the fearful iron madly, as if my impatient exertions were ever likely to move it; but Tunstal, with better, because cooler judgment, wrenched the hooked stake from the ground, and thrusting it into the jaws of the trap, attempted, as with a lever, to force it sufficiently open to admit of Webb's escape. It was vain; and while we were thus employed, the tall figure of a keeper was suddenly amongst us, and seizing us with a loud guffaw, gave Tunstal and myself to a man behind him; and then, producing a piece of iron from his pocket, applied it to the trap, and we beheld it slowly expand its tremendous jaws.

The man, without a word, seized Webb by his collar,

and pulled him after him through the woods, and our keeper treated us in the same style. We soon found ourselves at a cottage, where, after the keeper's wife had gazed at us, and said something about the wonderful wickedness of this age, we were put into a sort of naked parlour, where there was a chaff bed on the floor. To do the man justice, he brought each of us a large hunch of brown bread, and a basin of milk, and then left us for the night.

You may imagine our feelings. Tunstal was sullen and silent, and, in fact, soon asleep; but poor Webb lay and sobbed so bitterly, and prayed to God so fervently to forgive and restore him to his parents, that, notwithstanding my own misery, I could not help clasping my arms about his neck, and endeavouring to comfort him. O! that dreary, long, and woful night! Whether we slept or not, I cannot tell; but it seemed as if it would never be gone. We heard the old clock in the house go click, clack; and every time it struck the hour, making a whizzing, roaring noise, as if it had a hoarseness or an asthma. We heard the crickets chirping clamorously, and hated the sound: we heard the short bark of the fox without, and the deep howl of the ban-dog chained at the door, in reply; and a chanticleer in a loft above us, crow, crow, crow, as though he would never have done, and the morning never would come. But it did come; and after another hunch of bread and basin of milk, the keeper led us forth, and conducted us through the wood to the great Hall. O the dismal sinking and knocking of our hearts! We were to appear before the magistrate as poachers and vagabonds—to be punished—perhaps transported!—our fears suggested—perhaps to be hanged!! To attempt to describe all our sensations would be vain: we were ushered first into a lobby, where a crowd of spruce, jeering, and insulting servants came and stared

at us, and made pert, flippant remarks ; and then into the presence of the justice himself ; and behold ! it was the very gentleman whom we had seen in the woods.

" Ay," said he to a little fat man, his clerk, who sate at a table with his spectacles on, and his papers before him ; " ay, these are the very lads that I saw yesterday in the act of robbing a pheasant's nest ; and it is one of them who has done so much mischief in Patrick Ramsay's garden. What is the penalty for their offences ?"

" The penalty, sir," replied the clerk, looking at us through his great staring spectacles, " is the payment of five pounds each, and expenses of warrant, for the poaching, and to make full compensation for the damage done in Ramsay's garden ; in failure of either of these particulars, commitment to the house of correction for three months ; and the latter, sir, will, no doubt, be their fate ; for if I can judge by their appearance, no cash will be forthcoming."

And truly, well might Mr. Lang, so assume ; for, torn with briars, covered with mud and dust and blood, Tunstal with his cheek patched with hat-fur, and all of us haggard with fear and fatigue, we cut a sorry figure indeed.

At the hearing of this sentence all command of ourselves forsook us ; we cried, implored, and even danced on the floor for utter agony. But all seemed of no avail. The magistrate, with a severe air and loud harsh voice, bade us be silent—and we were silent ; all except poor Webb, who, kneeling at the awful man's feet, wrung his hands, and, with a most pitiful face, cried, " O sir ! dear sir ! do, do forgive us this once ; it is my birthday on Sunday, and if you will but forgive us I will send you some of my plum-pudding."

The simplicity of this address was too much for the

worthy man ; for a moment he stared at the lad in blank astonishment, and then, laying his hands on his sides, burst forth into a loud and long fit of laughter. It was sometime before he could compose himself; and his little, fat clerk echoed his master's broad laugh with a chuckling "He ! he ! he !" and a "Well, that is clever, indeed!"

But at length the magistrate, with a face of seriousness, in which a disposition to break into laughter again was very visible, said, "Your birthday, my boy ?—and pray who are you ?"

"O ! I am Harry Webb ! Harry Webb, sir !"

"Webb ? Webb ?" said the magistrate ; "what ! surely you are not the son of Mr. Webb of Haysford ?"

"O ! I am ! I am, sir ! What will my poor papa and mamma do ? O ! what will they do ?"

The magistrate, in evident surprise, said, "And who are these your companions ?" Harry named me ; and the magistrate again said, "Good gracious ! how came you in this condition ? and how came you to be taking my pheasant's nest ? Who is this other boy ?"

"O sir ! it is Ned Tunstal !"

"Ned Tunstal !" cried the magistrate ; "Ned Tunstal ! O ! now I see it all. Tunstal, I have heard of your doings. I have heard of a certain grey terrier that you keep to disturb all the game in the parish. I have heard of you, I assure you. So you keep a ferret and a net too, to catch rabbits ; and you can boat over the pound in a wash-tub, and get on the heron island, and up the great trees of the heronry, spite of tenter-hooks and all ! I'll tell you, Master Tunstal, you will get hanged one of these days."

The magistrate then rang a bell, and a servant appearing, "Take these two boys," he said, "to their parents," naming Webb and myself ; "no doubt they are anxious enough

about them ; and you, Mr. Lang, send a note with each of them ; explain in what circumstances they came before me, and give them proper warning of young Tunstal. That boy I shall send to his father with a note of a different kind."

The terrors of prison, of transportation, of hanging, were gone ; but never shall I forget the shame and humiliation with which we approached home. It was a fine glowing summer day : all around us seemed to lie in the repose of beauty and happiness ; and we, haggard, disfigured, and degraded, approached our homes, each like the prodigal son. The glory of our condition was turned into trouble and contempt. We came back with a sense of evil upon us, and a heart-soreness, for having filled, as we knew we had, our parents with inexpressible consternation and distress. But I will not attempt to describe the joyful surprise, the warm embrace, the tears with which we were received, nor the after explanation and reproofs ;—it is enough that the expedition to Spidenloft chapel has been a lesson to us all our lives. It shewed us how useless it is to seek pleasure in any path but that of plain, open, direct principle.





CHAPTER XVIII.

SCHOOL-DAYS, CONTINUED.

ADVENTURES AT TAMWORTH.

My father had formed some plan for my deriving great advantages from the tuition of Mr. Webb, but this Spiden-loft expedition seemed to disconcert him, and he forthwith sent me off to a school in the pretty, old-fashioned town of Tamworth. I had here again the initiatory ordeal of new-boyism to go through. One of my brothers had been there before me, and told me to prepare for a good plaguing at first. He assured me the earliest taste I should have of it, would be when I began to read in my class—the style

of reading in that school being very peculiar. Accordingly, the moment I began to read, the whole class began to laugh, and many a smothered snort and giggle was heard behind amongst the desks; and expecting this, and being sufficiently sensitive on the subject, as they began to laugh I began to cry. The master, however, with a stern voice, said, "Gentlemen, what means this?" and to me, "Walk up hither, sir," placing me at the top of the class, and, in fact, at the top of the school. "There!" he added, "that is your place, and it will be your own fault if you do not maintain it."

I dried my tears, and resolved that I *would* maintain it—and I did, to the very day of my departure. But the laughter was instantaneously quelled. A shade of deep mortification fell over the faces before so merry; and many a stiff contest of skill did the laughers afterwards wage to pull down their rival from his sudden eminence, but in vain.

Here then were laid the foundations for play-hour hostilities, and they soon shewed themselves, and as soon brought themselves to an end. It was not many days after the laughing scene, that a day's holiday was given on some occasion, and while the rest of the boys were busy in the playground, I had comfortably seated myself on a three-legged stool up stairs in the writing-school, before the fire with a book in my hand. I had not been long in this seat of quiet enjoyment when mine enemies of the first class came marching up stairs in a body, with Joe Clinton at their head, and his cousin Tom Smart at his heels; indications that some mischief was at hand. I sate, not unobservant, but apparently deep in my volume. The young conspirators collected close behind me with nods and winks, and significant grimaces and laughter, anticipative of triumph.

"How deep some folks are in their books!" said one.

"Ay, how philosophical they look!" said another.

"Ay, especially on a fine morning!" said a third.

"Yea, and more especially on a holiday;" said a fourth.

"Why," cried another, "this is the king of the philosophers to be sure!"

"O yes, I see!" said Joe Clinton, "enthroned on a three-legged stool!" and they laughed altogether most heartily.

"But philosophers may be bothered," said some one.

"And kings may be dethroned," said Tom Smart, and with that, he kicked the three-legged stool from under me, and down I went on the hearth amid the outrageous mirth of the young rogues.

If my face was indicative of my feelings, it was as red as the rising sun. I said nothing, but quietly arose, and walked down stairs, leaving the whole troop in ecstasies at their achievement; laughing till tears run down their faces, dancing, and drumming on the desks for excessive delight. In crossing the yard I encountered the master. The flush on my face caught his eye in a moment. "What is the matter?" said he. I told him; and he added sharply, "Follow me!" He advanced to the foot of the stairs. The happy conspirators were still loud with triumph of their deed—their laughter and their voices all sounding at once, forbade them to perceive his approach till he emerged amongst them. Then, what a sudden silence was there! He advanced to the desk, and looking sternly round, "Gentlemen," he said, "is this the manner in which you welcome a fresh playmate? Is this the way you take to demonstrate your advance in knowledge and good-breeding? Let every one, except the object of your ill-nature, fall to his ordinary task—your holiday is over!"

There was a general consternation—there were some awkwardly attempted apologies. Joe Clinton, who was never at a loss, said, “he was very sorry for his part, and was sure all the rest were, they meant no malice; it was only a joke, and they were ready to shake hands, and ask pardon.”

I advanced to shake hands, and begged it might be all forgotten; but the master was inexorable for some hours, when we *did* shake hands, and from that day forward were the best of friends; for this initiatory persecution once over, I found them a set of the best fellows alive, all united, and all ready to stand by one another to the extreme of partizanship. But I saw many another new fellow go through a similar ordeal without being always able to help him, and one actually left the school in consequence, taking coach early one morning for home, a distance of forty miles, and never returning.

But this one bad feature excepted, how pleasant is every other memory of that place! I passed through it the other day for the first time since I left it, a boy, and was astonished at the accuracy with which the town and neighbourhood had inscribed themselves on my memory. There were the old school and playground just as twenty years ago, save that the boys were gone, and the old vine from the front. There was the very old house opposite where old Nanny Jeffs set out her daily table of apples and gingerbread, and toffy, and kept our finances at the very lowest ebb. There was the still water below the old grey stone bridge, and the water-lily leaves floating on it, from amongst which we used to pull up many a good perch. There was the little bow-window where our good friend M. Bruno used to display his precious crockery; and there were Brig-gate and Gun-gate—that old street, out of

which at a certain hour of the day used to advance the crier, with his red-collared coat, and his bell, announcing, "Hot tripe in Gungit." And there was the old town-hall, where the dancing-class used to go once a week to meet their master, and to come back all on flame with the wonderful, wonderful beauty of the damsels that came to dance there too. And there was the ancient castle, all draped in ivy, with its flag-staff still standing aloft on its highest tower ; but its round hill, that used to be our beloved walk, all planted with trees, and guarded by a board threatening trespassers. And there I could descry beyond the town the very bend of the river where we used to bathe ; and, in another direction, that majestic old Hopwas Wood, where we went once a year a-nutting ! Heaven shed its brightest sunshine on that dear old town, and preserve its localities as they are for ages, even to that single line of pebbles that runs down one of its streets, and marks the boundary of the two counties of Stafford and Warwick ! What a wonder it was to us to put one foot on each side, and stand in two shires at once ! We seemed to have a stride mightier than that of Ajax or of Polyphemus !

But I must now give some more particulars of school-master and scholars. Our master was a young man, not much, I believe, above twenty. Many thought him too young for his post ; but he had inherited the school from his uncle. Many thought him not more unfit by youth than by disposition. He was fond of poetry—fond of the country—fond of mechanics, and of constructing all sorts of nick-nacks ;—we thought him the most fitting person in the world.

During school-hours he presided gravely at his desk, and saw us through our tasks with the propriety of an old man ; but he loved to have us up in a morning, and would

sally out with us at a game of hare-and-hounds. One boy was dispatched with his horn some ten minutes before us, and then, away we went, over hedge and bank, with our master at our head, each armed with his leaping-pole, to fly over ditches and brooks, through lawns and copses, through lanes, and ever open commons. Now we were in full view of our hare that blew a horn; now at fault; now hearing the dim sound of the horn in some far-off valley; and now giving chase to the two-legged hare on some open heath; till warm, glowing, panting, full of health and happiness, and talking altogether of the morning's exploits, we returned to our rolls and milk, and to the day's duty.

He loved too, on summer evenings, to lead us away through the old villages, and past old halls that lay far away down in wooded valleys, and to tell us as we went by, the old stories and ludicrous facts connected with them, and the singular characters that inhabited them;—as for instance a squire that was always aiming at language that he did not understand, and said that his house was the *capital* of all Glascourt, a village there; that it had a very *navigable* road to it; and that the common *beverage* of the Staffordshire people was *bread and cheese*!

Our master pointed out to us in these rambles the curious plants in the sedgy waters and boggy moorlands, and the birds that haunted them; and led us through all the old green and tree-overgrown lanes, and up to the hill tops where the best prospects might be had. He encouraged us too to take our stilts with us; and mounted on them, we crossed to and fro over the brooks, and went stalking races on the heath, cutting such ludicrous figures, eight or ten of us on our tall stilts, that he and the other boys used to stand and laugh most heartily at us. We

might be met sometimes coming up a lane full speed, looking like a company of long-legged cranes ; and much was the wonder of simple country people whom we met in such situations.

O that is a nice old pastoral country, and those were glorious rambles ! I remember once we came near the village of Amington, to a windmill. The mill was standing still ; and the sail-cloth was wrapped up, as is customary when there is no wind, or too much wind ; and we were tempted by the broad ladder-looking sail that pointed straight down to the ground, to mount up its bars ; when, behold ! at once the mill gave a crack and a groan, and the sails began to go round. Up slowly went the sail on which we stood from the ground, and a famous scream was raised by the whole band of climbers, and down dropped numbers of the nearest to the bottom, like so many frogs from a bank into a pool ; but those who were nearest the top, and I was one of that unlucky number, clung fast to the sail, and looked only with horror to being carried up, and perhaps being tossed away into the air. But as suddenly, the sail stopped, and there we were suspended aloft ; and in the next moment we heard a laugh in the mill, and beheld the miller's mealy face grinning at a round look-out hole, and enjoying our consternation. But having had his joke—for he had just stopped his mill for the night, and it was too tempting a sight to see a troop of boys come and begin climbing up the sail—he did not leave us long in purgatory. He came down laughing, and brought out of his stable a quantity of trusses of straw for us to drop upon, and having crept down as near to the bottom as we could, we dropped softly into the straw, and were glad to escape so easily.

Our worthy master must have had what the phrenologists call the organ of constructiveness very large, for he

was always constructing something. He had a workshop at the top of his house; and there many an evening, and far into the night, have I been with him, hammering and screwing, and blowing, and contriving. Now we were making a machine to rule lines in copybooks; and now one to bind books and cut their edges; and then we were making a blowpipe with a double pair of bellows, like those of a blacksmith, or of a furnace, to keep up a continuous blast. And we made the bellows too; and many a journey had I up stairs and down stairs with patterns to the smith for its pipe, and to the currier for good Basil leather (I remember the name to this day), for nails, and screws, and many other things—black as a sweep, and happy as a prince. And then we made a telescopè, with the tube of strong card-paper, and saw the wondrous faces of the moon and planets through our own wondrous work. And then we made a kite (that is, master made it, and we helped) of the size and shape of a sailor, and painted his blue jacket and striped trousers, and christened him Ben, and sent him up at night with a lantern in his hand, to the terrible dismay of the whole town, who seriously believed it to be an emissary of Bonaparte's sent by some mysterious contrivance to spy out the land.

The next achievement was to build a boat, and set it afloat on the brave river Anker, and set up a sail, and sail away many a mile. Nor was this all; we spent whole half-holidays in the fields—for our good master kept a cow—mending hedges and gates, and even erected a whole cow-shed of posts and gorse, and thatched it in the most approved manner. Ay, and we performed a greater feat still. There was a certain little pig that used to run into the room sometimes where we dined, and pick up the crumbs that fell from the table; and a witty wag declared

that the swine was under the table, but the day would come when he should be exalted and set upon the table. Just before Christmas the butcher came and slew him, and when he had cut him up, we mounted to the top of the brewhouse, and drew the flitches up the chimney, and fetched clean sawdust, and kept a fire for many days, to smoke-dry the bacon, which finally was pronounced prime—and then the hog which had been under the table came to be set upon it.

And yet more,—in the garden was a summer-house. Neatly framed of timber was this house; floor and walls all framed snugly together, and handsomely was it thatched; and within, lined with moss, and adorned with shells; and very pleasant it was to drink tea in on a summer afternoon. But our good master thought it rather too near the noisy playground, and resolved to shift it to the bottom of the garden, a distance of at least half a furlong.

This was a glorious attempt sure enough. To shift a house? Why, the next thought would be to shift the church-steeple! But we set actively to work under the directive genius of our master. We dug round it, and laid bare its foundations; we then hoisted it with pulleys and set it upon rollers. We cleared a way for it down the garden, and fixing ropes to it, hauled it with might and main, and it followed as steadily as a ship sails before a steady breeze. Let those conceive our exultation that can. Day after day, ay, I might almost say, night after night,—for we were there pulling and hauling, and shouting till late into the nights,—and when in our beds we could hardly sleep for thoughts of it, and in the morning jumped up, and hardly gave ourselves three seconds to throw our clothes on. We worked with blistered hands and shining faces, and clothes all smeared with clay and garden soil. But,

at length, we brought the house safe and sound, without crack or rift, to its destined place; set it down, withdrew the rollers, filled in the soil, and gave three cheers with flourished hats, and then rushed in to see how it seemed, and how the prospect into the fields looked from it!

Ah! that was a joyous time! Could the transfer of a whole city give us half the wonder, much less the fresh feeling, the ardour of enterprise, the glory of triumph, now?





CHAPTER XIX.

BUT I must not omit a very marked event which occurred there. There came a philosophical lecturer. To our fancies, a philosophical lecturer resembled nothing but Socrates, or Plato, or Epictetus. We almost expected to see him in Greek costume, and with a venerable beard. But our philosophical lecturer turned out to be a tall and very gentlemanly-looking man—a Dr. Stancliffe, or some such name; who was very merry with us boys, and gave us all tickets of admittance to his lectures—probably because his room was not over crowded by better customers. To us, however, the exhibition was full of the most intense

wonder and delight, and in return for our tickets, we gave the doctor credit for being the most extraordinary man in existence. We had some knowledge of the elements of chemistry, and had made men of pith, and bears of pith, dance under our master's electrical machine, from which we had learned some idea of the electrical power by sundry smart shocks and bangs which it had dealt us. But when this machine—for the doctor borrowed it of our master, and his galvanic trough too, no doubt to save the carriage of his own much larger ones—when these were in the learned doctor's hands, they did right wondrously indeed. We saw plants and flowers of rosin spread themselves on plates of pitch as naturally as nature. We gazed on the intense beauty of gases and metals in combustion, till we could hardly see anything else; and were so bewildered with flashes, and bangs, and hisses and explosions—and charmed with the miraculous metamorphoses of matter that went on before our eyes—liquids turned into solids, solids into liquids, water on fire, and fire burning in the water, and all kinds of things turning all kinds of colours, that we were philosophy mad for a month after—began galvanic piles that never were piled up, electrical machines that were never finished, and *finished* jars, bottles, pots, glass tubes, and such matters in such abundance, that our master in the end became half mad too.

The greatest of the doctor's exploits remains, however, to be told. I and Will Sedley, a youth of whom I have to speak presently, were sent off with a couple of covered baskets and a note from our master, to a farm-house a few miles from the town. The purport of the note, we were told, was to borrow a couple of pigeons and a couple of rabbits, which the note faithfully promised should be returned safe and sound the next day. We brought the

rabbits and doves, and delivered them safely to the doctor at the town-hall, where he was busy amongst his apparatus, preparing for his evening lecture. At the lecture we punctually attended, and were pretty well surprised to see a sheep's head set upon the table with all the wool on it, as if it had been just cut off the animal, under the influence of the galvanic action, open its eyes wide, move its ears, grind its teeth, and appear as if it were actually coming to life without the body. But what was our astonishment to see the doctor deliberately take one of the pigeons, plunge it into a tub of water, and absolutely drown it. "There!" said Will Sedley to me, "that is a pretty go! Didn't they promise the old farmer to send them all back safe and sound? What will our master say to this? And what will the farmer say?" But to our still greater wonder there sate our master in the very front of the people, looking on the doctor's destruction of the pigeon, with a face as round and as pleased as if he had promised that the rabbits and the pigeons should be all drowned instead of being all sent back safe. Our astonishment was, however, yet to receive an addition; for the doctor, taking out the pigeon, and holding it up to the view of all the people, said, "You see, ladies and gentlemen, that this pigeon, which was just now alive, is now really dead; it is in fact drowned." "Ay, by Jove, is it! and what will the old farmer say?" exclaimed Will Sedley, so far forgetting himself that he spoke loud enough for the doctor to hear him, who turned round and looked fixedly at us, but, perceiving that we were all silent, he went on,—"It is, as I said, really drowned, and if any gentleman doubts it, he is perfectly welcome to take it in his hand and examine it for himself." Hereupon, he handed it to a gentleman near him, who, after looking at its eyes and surveying it attentively, said, "It's dead enough,—

that's certain." "Ay, by Jove, and if the old farmer could but see it!" again said Will Sedley, so loud that we could all hear him; "what a pretty fellow he would think you, wouldn't he? You'll not catch me fetching live pigeons again for you, though, I can tell you!"

"Did you speak to me, young gentleman?" said the doctor, turning towards us; but the awe of the company kept Will silent; and the doctor, taking the bird again in his hand, added, "I will now shew you, ladies and gentlemen, the most wonderful discovery of modern times;—nothing less than that, by the aid of this instrument," pointing to the galvanic trough, "we can restore life—that we have in our hands the actual power of restoring consciousness to the drowned."

With that he laid the end of a wire proceeding from the galvanic apparatus upon the neck of the pigeon, touched it with a rod, and up jumped the pigeon, gave a few convulsive struggles, and the next moment was flying about the room!

There was a murmur of applause and wonder from the whole delighted audience; and Will Sedley, starting forward with eager enthusiasm, caught the bird, and restored it to the doctor. "There, my friend," said the doctor, gazing with admiration on the youth's fine face, lit up with all its wonder and youthful ardour, "you may put it in the basket, and bring me a rabbit."

The same experiment was tried on the rabbit, and with the same result; and that the company might be perfectly satisfied that there was no deception, but that it was a result based on certain principles of matter, he offered to repeat it upon the other pigeon, and the other rabbit. But all were fully satisfied, and desirous to spare the poor creatures the pain of drowning and resuscitation.

Our wonder may be imagined; and, as we went home, Joe Clinton held forth very largely on what the doctor had said of having galvanic apparatus kept in all towns, and near all dangerous waters, as commonly as fire-engines were. "Then," said he, addressing a lad near him who had run the risk of drowning one day from his stupidity, "theni Baker, my boy, you can indulge yourself in drowning as often as you please—we shall be in no hurry to pick you out—nay, I think I shall drown you myself now and then, it will be good fun." But if our surprise was great, what was that of the old farmer the next day, when we took his rabbits and pigeons home again, and a note from our master, in which he was informed that one of the pigeons and one of the rabbits were drowned yesterday, but were all right and well again, as he would find, and as we could testify.

"Drowned does he say?" said the old farmer as he lifted the lid of each basket and saw all alive, "drowned? he means to say that they got souzed pretty well with some water, I guess, when the gentleman from Lunnun lectured on them."

"They were really drowned," we both said at once, "and the doctor brought them to life again."

The old man and his wife both looked incredulous. "Ah! my good lads, you and Mr. Hudson are joking us a bit. Well, well, I don't understand it, but if doctors have found out the way to bring things alive again, oddsbodikins! but they'll have plenty o' custom."

"What does the Lunnun gentleman mean by lecturing on them?" asked the wife.

"O! I reckon," replied the farmer, "he means telling all about them."

"Telling all about them!" rejoined the wife; "but how

can a gentleman from Lunnun tell onybody all about ar rabbits and pigeons—who'se likely to know all about them so well as us who have reared 'em?"

"I know not," said the farmer; "gentlemen from Lunnun can do wonderful things—they are as sharp as a needle with two points in Lunnun. Thou hears the gentleman by lecturing on 'em has drowned 'em, and then brought them alive again."

"Haud thy tongue! tell na me," said the old woman, "about drowning and bringing alive—if the gentleman can do that, he need not come all this way from Lunnun—he may make his fortune at home; and if folks can be brought to live again, will our king and queen ever die thinks tur?"

"By Leddy, no!" said the old man, "and wor they really drowned, sen ye?"

We assured them it was the fact, and that all the gentry of Tamworth had seen it done.

"Then," said the old man, "they are the valuablest creatures in this country—though I say it." And hereupon he made us shew him precisely which they were that had been dead and were alive again, and he snipped a bit out of the rabbit's ear, and cut off a claw of the pigeon, that he might always know them. "That 'el be summut to talk on," said he, with evident pride, "and they shall live as long as I can contrive it—and if they die, why, I shall ask yore mester if he can't bring 'em to life again, I guess he'll learn the trick, won't he? He's as deep as most." So having given us a hearty lunch, we returned and told our master what the old farmer and his wife had said, and in the evening, when the doctor came, we were called into the parlour to tell it again—and the doctor, and all of us, laughed right heartily at the old peoples' notions.

So passed our pleasant time at that happy school; and both laughter and tears came into my eyes the other day as I passed Hopwas Wood, and thought it looked so exactly the same in extent, in aspect, in the size of its trees, the very smoke so rising from the keeper's house in the lofty centre, that one might be half beguiled into calling to our comrades in the wood; and yet how changed are all those comrades! how loud one might call ere they heard us! All scattered to distant places and differing fortunes; some dead, and some of the living, sober men and fathers of families.

Yet I could not help laughing, even while I thought these serious thoughts, as I remembered the day when we went there a-nutting, with our satchels slung by our sides, to carry our dinners in and bring back our nuts. And how we ranged the wood in our joy; and climbed the trees, and pulled down the boughs, and gathered the beautiful clusters; and then assembling round our fire, set on our gipsy kettle, and sate round to a merry dinner, while our worthy French master M. Bruno related his sole feat of horsemanship.

A good old man was M. Bruno; a refugee of a noble family; but who had not disdained to teach his native tongue, and to make out all remaining deficiencies by keeping a little shop of china and glass, and fishing-tackle. There we bought lines and hooks, set properly on lengths of Indian weed, and duly weighted with shot-corns. Most tempting did his cane rods and jemmy-tartars look, as they stood by his door in a glittering sheaf, on a bright summer day.

M. Bruno was a stout man, whose journeys seldom exceeded a few hundred yards, to the school, or to private pupils. But on a recent occasion he had to perform a

journey of ten miles, and he deemed it necessary to have a horse; and being a poor horseman, he desired the keeper of horses to let him have one that would go steadily, and would not attempt to run away with him. The man told him, he would suit him to a hair; and accordingly he placed at M. Bruno's door, a horse, all whose ribs it required no great arithmetician to count; whose head seemed a standing miracle, set upon so slender a neck, and yet supported, and whose knees were bent with a most devotional curve.

M. Bruno, who better understood the parts of speech than the parts of a horse, mounted in the innocence of his soul, and his steed went as soberly as he could desire; but after a time, being alarmed by a milestone, that declared that he had progressed but two miles, while his watch as pertinaciously insisted that he had been on horseback a full hour, by sundry strokes of his cane he succeeded in putting his steed into a quicker pace; but was immediately terrified by the panting and loud breathing of the beast.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I fear me much de animal vill break his bellows!—he must certainly break his bellows!" To prevent this catastrophe, he again relaxed his pace; but a carriage coming behind as he descended a hill, he hastened to get the creature out of its way, when down it fell as if it had been shot, and threw poor M. Bruno into the middle of the road.

"Oh! what is the matter?" cried the travellers in the carriage, that just pulled up in time to avoid going over him.

"O!" said Bruno, scrambling up all over dust, and with a broken head, "it is just vat I did look for. De poor animal have broken his bellows, and vot I vill do I cannot tell!"

The travellers smiled, and went on; and by and by M. Bruno got up his steed in the best way he could, and led him back to the town. When he saw the horsekeeper, he exclaimed, "Ah! my good friend, it is very bad case, very bad case indeed; but *en verité*, de creature have broken his bellows, and we must make what bargain we can." The horsekeeper was contented to charge him only about double what the jade was worth, and M. Bruno was henceforth contented to travel on foot.

WILL SEDLEY IN THE LION'S DEN.

BUT we must leave the masters, and take a passing peep at one or two of the boys, for in every school there are some characters worth knowing; and first, there is Will Sedley. Ah! I loved that lad: a cheerful-hearted fellow he was,—somewhat of a wag, yet somewhat of a poet too. Like poets, he hated calculation. He loved the country, riding on his pony, and strolling through the woods and fields. He was a great favourite both with the boys and master. Though he never made much out with figures, or with his Latin; yet in history, geography, and natural philosophy, there was nobody that could come up with Will Sedley. He gloried in spouting an oration, and read with a harmony of intonation and depth of feeling that were beautiful; and in his frank and affectionate way of talking there was something wonderfully insinuating.

He won the hearts of all that came near him; but, unfortunately for him, our master was going out for a few days, and got old Peter Kellerby, the accountant, a great classic, a great mathematician, and a great pedant, to supply his place; and here poor Will Sedley found a difference. When he took up his sum to old Peter, never

did I see such a malicious smile as that old fellow put on. "Hum, hum, a-well! and is *this* Master Sedley, that I have heard so much of? Hum, a-well! and he has made a blunder in a simple addition sum that a child of six years old would blush at. A pretty character you give of yourself, Master Sedley, and a pretty credit you do your master; a-well!"

I think I see young Sedley now. The shame, the indignation, that burned up to the very roots of his hair as he felt himself thus held up to ridicule before the whole school, set his face all in a blaze. He took the slate somewhat rudely from the old man, and springing down from the desk, went to his place in about three strides.

"Ay, ay! take it away, indeed!" said Peter Kellerby; "'t is enough to make even a monkey blush."

But if Will Sedley could correct the sum, he would not. The indignation of his spirit was so great that he laid his head upon his slate, and never stirred till the hour of breaking up,—when good Master Kellerby, perceiving the state of the case, ordered him into the room called the Lion's Den, there to remain till the sum, or rather the temper, was corrected.

Poor Sedley!—never was lad so pitied—our hearts were all sore about him. We knew he was wrong; we knew he ought to have been more attentive—more submissive; but then we felt how great the outrage offered to his sensitive, high spirit had been. He stayed in the den with the obstinacy of a martyr till bed-time. His sum was written upon a slate fastened to the wall by Kellerby, in its false state, but he never attempted to alter it. We took him buns, bought at old Nanny Jeffs, and put them in at a window on the point of a long stick, but he would not touch them. We cut a piece of board out of the school-

floor above, and let down a can of water, but he would not drink it; and there he was till bed-time; and there he was sent next morning; and there stayed, never offering to correct his sum, nor to eat anything, though Thomasin, the maid, when Kellerby was in the school, often went and asked him.

The master was to come home in the evening, and I believe he had determined to stay there till he came, in the blind confidence of indignation that he was right. Old Kellerby looked in at him at noon, and what was his wrath and astonishment to find him sitting with his Ovid's Metamorphoses lying open on the floor, and his head resting on the table, with a paper full of rhymes under his hand, and his eyes glancing with delight as he chanted over some such juvenile jingles as these :—

THE LAY OF THE LION'S DEN.

Hum, drum!—hum, drum!
That's the way now Kellerby's come.
O! how the old fellow would doat on me,
If I did but love the Rule-of-Three.
And I love numbers, there is no doubt,—
Numbers of things he knows nothing about!
Let Homer and Virgil sing of Troy,—
So I've but a merry and laughing boy,
That cares not for Georgic nor Bucolic,
If we've in the woods our Saturday frolic.
O! sweet are the bosky hills of Shirley,
Where the cuckoo comes in the spring so early:
And sweet, I dare say, are Sallust and Livy;
But give me my pony, and then—tantivy!
Over the downs I will scour, nor mind
Whether Horace's mistress be cruel or kind.

Ah! good Mr. Kellerby, what is Eutropius
To woods that are green and streams that are copious?
There's Cicero, *I* can love in my walk,
And listen for hours to his glorious talk;
I can think, as I go, had he seen this man—
This Kellerby—thus his oration had ran :—
“Te non novimus—nescimus quis”—
Now is this not just as the old fellow is?—

Here the lay was suddenly ended; for, as poor Mr. Kellerby heard him chanting these profanities, as he called them, all his patience forsook him, and with the bitterest gesticulations and words he prognosticated upon him all that was evil and unfortunate in life. Sedley heard him and was silent. But evening came, and with it our beloved master. The culprit was brought out; old Kellerby recited his offences. Sedley made his vindication; but when our master calmly and seriously shewed Sedley how wrong he had been,—how wrong to resent and to resist his deputed authority, the poor boy dropped at once on his knees before the stern old pedagogue, and with tears that gushed out in torrents, begged his pardon in tones that would have melted a rock.

The proud boy was humble in a moment. I believe he would have perished rather than bend to the iron rule of Kellerby; but the voice of reason and affection cut him to the quick. He rose up, and advancing to the slate, corrected the sum in an instant, and asked pardon of his master in a manner that made us all cry together. Our master's eyes were filled with tears—old Kellerby himself was touched—and this painful scene was over.

THE EXPLOIT OF JERRY RODS.

A very different lad was Jerry Rods. Jerry was a thin lanky lad, with long arms and legs. In school he was the very reverse of Will Sedley, for he wrote a beautiful hand, ay, like copper-plate itself; and as for accounts—why he went through them as naturally as a fish goes through water—they seemed his native element; but here ceased his in-door genius. He did not merely seem dull at taking general knowledge, his brain appeared absolutely incapable of it. Six years he had been there; and all the hammering and puzzling left him just where he was—a capital penman—a very dragon at accounts—in all beside, an incorrigible dunce.

Yet out of school, who so clever as Jerry Rods? In all bargains for rabbits and guinea-pigs, Jerry was the man. He chaffered for fishing-tackle, he cheapened nuts and apples. Was there a scheme afloat for a piece of secret fun, or a sly run into the country, Jerry's long nose and chin were wagging in everybody's face. He was the very soul of good-nature, and every thing that was desired, Jerry was sure to accomplish.

Jerry was, however, very fond of queer megrims and slang phrases, and a broad mode of expression in his merriment; these were his wit, and these brought him into trouble. To one only exploit of this kind we must confine ourselves. There was a wall some six or eight feet high, between our playground and the back-yard of a respectable lady, Mrs. Berry. Upon this wall one day at noon, Jerry had contrived to mount, and springing himself along with his hands like a frog, his long legs danglang on either side, he advanced very near to Mrs. Berry's kitchen window; when, suddenly throwing his arms and legs about in a very odd

and windmill fashion, he cried out ecstatically, "ou-rou-didoo-gaup—ou-rou-didoo-gaup! Oi spoii, Berries aiting beef and cabbage!"



At this singular spectacle and salutation, the servants called in Mrs. Berry—Mrs. Berry called in our master—our master made his appearance in the playground with flaming visage, and Jerry dropped from his elevation like a snow-ball smitten by the sun, and lay at the foot of the wall in a heap that desired not to be seen. But for such an offence there could be no expiation but rebuke, fasting, and the lion's den.

Jerry has since turned his faculty for figures to a good account; and is I am told at this day, a wealthy Birmingham manufacturer of buttons and glass beads.

JOE CLINTON, AND HIS PRANKS.

Joe Clinton, I have already mentioned;—he was the captain and leader of the school. He learned little or nothing, not because he could not, but because he did not care to do it. He had a goodly presence—a good share of self-assu-

rance—a faculty of commanding everybody. He was at the head of every thing, and nobody ever thought of disputing his sway. He was a chief who levied black-mail on every one according to his particular talent. The cunning boy out of school planned his schemes—the boy of address executed them ;—in school, the boy of ability wrote his tasks, and he seemed to do a deal without doing anything. He said to one, Come—and he came; to another, Go—and he went. This was a dangerous state for after-life, and necessarily implied much apparent frankness with hollowness and duplicity. He was one that gloried in a clever trick, done by whatever means, at whatever expense of truth ; and laughed at deceptions on his own father. Such a character, all reprobate when absent, and yet join with him in the laugh when present. Such exploits as the following, were his amusements.

During the holidays he took his gun, and was found by the keeper of Sir Andrew Bagnall, shooting on that worthy baronet's grounds.

"Young gentleman," said the keeper, "I would be glad to see your certificate."

"I don't happen to have it along with me."

"Then if it is not along with you," said the keeper, "you must go along with me."

"Very well," said Joe, "I will."

They went up to the Hall, and the keeper advanced to a side door, but Joe walked coolly up to the front door and rung the bell.

"Come away, I tell you," cried the keeper in amaze, "this is the door of the justice-room; I wonder at your impudence."

"Wonder as much as thou pleasest," said Joe; for, strange as it may seem, he belonged to the Society of Friends.

The keeper approached to take him away, when the servant at the same moment opened the door.

"Is thy master in?" asked Joe.

"Yes sir," said the servant.

"Then give Joseph Clinton's respects to him, and say that he will be glad to see him."

An immediate invitation to enter was brought. He found the old baronet in his easy chair, who, unable from his infirmities to rise, yet shook him heartily by the hand, mistaking him for his father, whose name too was Joseph.

"Very glad to see you, Mr. Clinton; very glad indeed! And how is Mrs. Clinton?"

"Why, not very well, I thank thee," said Joe; "and I was thinking a rabbit or a leveret would do her good, and I knew I had only to mention it to thee."

"O! you do me great honour, Mr. Clinton,—great honour,—I heartily thank you. Whatever game Mrs. Clinton likes, only let me know, and she shall have it—poor dear lady. I am very sorry,—very sorry indeed. And how many children have you, Mr. Clinton?"

"There are seven," said Joe.

"Seven! seven children? Why you look very young indeed to have seven children!"

"Yes," said Joe, "everybody tells me so; and they have followed one another very fast,—thou'd scarcely see the difference of their ages." Old Sir Andrew's eyes were very bad.

Here Sir Andrew rung the bell. "Call John," said he, and the keeper came.

"O! John, go with Mr. Clinton, and kill him whatever he likes; and carry it home for him."

The keeper made a profound bow; and Joe shaking hands very heartily with Sir Andrew, gave him his best

thanks, and set out with the keeper, who went along outwardly civil, but inwardly most terribly chagrined. Joe led him a good round, had him out for most of the day, and laughed in his sleeve as he saw the poor fellow labouring after him under his load of hares, rabbits, and pheasants to his father's house.

This was a capital joke to tell when school began again; and many a one has he since played off, at which what is called *good society* laughs, without thinking for a moment of the duplicity and injustice involved in them. Who are most to blame? Joe, or those who applaud his practice jokes?

GATLiffe, THE MIDSHIPMAN.

BUT of all our schoolfellows none ever interested me more, of none do I oftener think with a melancholy feeling, than Edward Gatliffe. He was a genteel youth of about seventeen, who had been a midshipman in a man-of-war, and had seen in a few years a good deal of service in various seas, and various battles. His father died, and he became dependent upon an uncle, who disapproved of his continuing in the navy, and determined to bring him up to trade. The first step was to send him to this school; but poor Gatliffe's heart was at sea. He cared for nothing but sea affairs. He loved to sit and talk of the places and actions he had been in; and so little did he know of common concerns, that he had no idea of property. We one day in our walk saw two bulls fighting in a field; and nothing came into his head for days but going to shoot one of these bulls. We were to get into an oak-tree, and make a noise to attract them, and when they came near, to shoot one of them at least in the forehead. He always carried a brace of pistols with him, and shot at posts and trees, and almost

anything that took his fancy when out walking; and he warmly pressed me to join him in this bull-fighting adventure. It was with the utmost difficulty that I made him comprehend that they were property, and that we should get into gaol, and I knew not what.

After he left the school, his uncle bound him apprentice to a linen-draper. The poor lad languished, and grew half mad; and in that state went away, nobody knew where.

There was a worthy young man, Richard Dodd, the miller, that having come, by the death of his father, early to his property, felt the deficiency of his education, and came of his own accord to this school. He and Gatliffe, being of similar ages, were great cronies. Some time after they had left school, Richard Dodd came home one day from London, and asking his mother what inquiries there had been for him, amongst other things she told him that a very strange and suspicious young man had inquired after him—ill-dressed, wretched looking, and yet asking for him familiarly as Richard Dodd.

"And did he leave his name, mother?" asked Richard.

"His name," said his mother, "Gat, Gat, yes, Gatliffe, he said it was."

"Gatliffe!" exclaimed Richard, "and ill-dressed and wretched? And where did he say he was going?"

"He said no more," replied his mother; "I did not know, Richard, what you had to do with such as he."

"Good heavens!" said Richard, rising up, and drawing on his boots which he had just pulled off—"my old friend!—and in distress!—and sent away from my house!"

He mounted his horse, and rode into the town of Northampton. There, by many inquiries, he found that poor Edward had been some days, and had exchanged his good

brown coat with gold buttons, with a broker, for an old blue one and some shillings to boot. They thought he was gone to London. Thither Richard went, and spent more than a week, especially amongst the ships, in vain inquiries. He could hear nothing of him, and I believe nothing has been heard of him since. Most probably he entered the navy as a common sailor; but his fate is unknown.

Thus have we gone, once more, the old school-days over; another chapter or two, and then, my dear young readers, good principles, good fortune, and good-by to you.





CHAPTER XX.

THE RENT-NIGHT SUPPERS, AND COUSIN JOHN'S STORIES.

HAVING passed through school-days, our history must necessarily come speedily to a close, for when a boy has finally left school, he soon ceases to be a boy. Business, or those higher, drier studies which those who are destined for the learned professions are then devoted to, belong rather to the history of men, than boys; but there are a few more incidental things which give an interest to the life of the country boy, which ought to have a passing notice before we entirely close our volume. The village wake, with its gingerbread stalls, its shows and rustic

groups of holiday keepers ; Whitsuntide with its stalls, and shows, and whirligigs too ; and its gay processions of clubs, or friendly societies, are times of great interest and delight to the country lad. Harvest, both hay-harvest and corn-harvest, are busy and jovial seasons with him. He joins the merry shout of the harvest-home throng, and glories in the homely festivities of the harvest-supper. What delight it used to be, to see perhaps twenty or thirty rustic men and women, whom we had seen so laboriously at work in the harvest field, yet all the time full of jokes and laughter, and country stories, now sitting down to the great oak table with the master at its head, to a profusion of roast beef, plum-puddings, roast geese, and plenty of good beer ; all joining loudly and eagerly in talking again the whole harvest season over, and wishing one another many another such a time. These, and Christmas with its mince-pies, and holidays, and merry games of turn-trencher, blind-man's-buff, and forfeits, all are bright spots in the country boy's year ; but there came none of these more deliciously to me than the rustic rent-nights, that my father used to hold—twice a year—in November and in May. As the greater part of the village belonged to him, he used to give the tenants a supper after the paying of their rent ; and there was collected almost every man of the hamlet.

The supper was a regular old English one, of roast beef, plum-pudding, pigeon-pies, roast fowls, fruit-tarts, when the season permitted, and plenty of ale and pipes. The paying of their half-year's rent seemed to them a load off every man's mind. They all seemed pleased with themselves, and their landlord with them. The evening was given up to a free-and-easy, and right hearty and uncemonious enjoyment of rustic mirth. Every man was at his ease, from the substantial tradesman down to the smallest

cottar. All the old stories of the neighbourhood for a century almost back, were revived, and inspired laughter as genuine as they did on their first rehearsal. Sammy Hand, though no tenant, could not resist joining them on those occasions; William Woolley was there as one; Sam Poundall, the brickmaker, and Abraham Street, the brick-layer, were very full of country wit, which might be heard plain enough, for Abraham was deaf, and Sam shouted to him, and Abraham shouted back as deaf men do.

On these occasions, Cousin John was a regular attendant. He was as much a standing dish as any dish on the table. He came in capacity of vice-president—always taking one end of the table, as my father did the other—for my mother while she stayed, and she always sate down with them out of courtesy and good-neighbourhood, took a seat near my father; and when the tobacco-smoke began to circulate made her retreat. Without Cousin John, the whole concern would have lost its relish, and seemed quite out of joint. He helped my father to receive the money, and so dispatched that serious part of the evening. He was ready to shake hands with everybody, and in his loud, hearty voice to inquire after everything that concerned them. He had his standing jokes for everybody, according to their trades, and known characters. He asked the blacksmith if he had got that spark quenched yet that flew into his throat one day,—the brickmaker, if he was able to temper his clay with anything better than water,—the shoemaker, whether his soling leather took as much *soaking* as ever; the bricklayer, if the lime was not a very dry and thirsty commodity, and so on; and there was as much mirth over these inquiries as if they had never been made before. The weather, the dishes on the table, were all suggestive of his good sayings. In May, he told them to lay about

them, for he knew they were all as welcome as the flowers in May. In November, lucky was he if the night were rough, the worse the weather the better he liked it—for he was sure to exclaim, “Happy’s the man that has not a home to flee to to-night!” meaning that he was at home, and had no need to flee to one. Lucky was he too if there appeared a dish of soles, for then his regular prayer was, “that not a sole (*soul*) might be saved!” He had two stories too that he was as sure to tell on these nights as the nights came. So regularly were they looked for, that if he did not bring them out very early, you soon heard somebody asking, “Well, Mr. John, arn’t we to have Paul Elks? or arn’t we to have The Mayor and his Relation?”

“To be sure,” Cousin John would say, “with all my heart;” for it was with all his heart. “A witty fellow, that traveller was—wasn’t he? He was the sort of man, now, to make his way in the world. Such a sheepish, bashful fellow as myself, would never have done a thing half as clever—just for the want of a good assurance, and a ready wit, eh?” And then he laughed, and told the story of

THE MAYOR AND HIS RELATION.

You know, gentlemen, the very clockwork sort of regularity, or if you do not know, you have heard at least of it, with which the old school of commercial travellers used to go their rounds. One we have often heard talk of, who used to have a particular dinner cooking for him at a particular inn, in one part or other of the country, on every day in the year; and there, to an hour, or perhaps to a minute, would he appear, on the stated day. Just one of that punctual class was the traveller I am going to tell you of.

It was on his exact day—his exact half-yearly day, that

he entered his inn in the good city of Coventry, and expected to have seen a certain favourite joint turning before the kitchen fire ; but he was agreeably surprised to find one still more to his fancy there—nothing less than a fine haunch of venison. He rubbed his hands with delight, and said to the cook, “ Why Mary, you *are* preparing a princely dinner for us to-day, that is a dish worth riding a weary stage for this morning indeed ! what hour do you mean to have it on table, for I must just run round and let my people know that I am here ; but, by the powers ! a sharp eye must be kept on this noble haunch, Mary. A minute too late, and the consequence might be serious, amongst all the mouths that will be watering after this glorious roast. I say Mary, let me know the time it is to be carried up to a moment, and I will set my watch to your clock, and the finest order that I ever took since I was on the road shall not keep me from paying my respects to it. What is the time, eh Mary ? What is the time ? ”

“ The time is three o'clock, sir, to a second, that is the order ; but I am afraid, sir, you won't be able to dine off this haunch, sir ! ”

“ What ! what is that you say ? Not dine off this haunch ? By the powers, Mary ! are you gone cracked ? do you know what you are talking of ? Not dine off this haunch ? then who on earth is going to dine off it, if I am not ? Where is the man that has a greater right ? that has *such* a right ? Am not I the oldest man on the road ? Am not I the old true-penny that sticks to your house like a bur to a frieze jacket ? ”

“ Why, sir,” said Mary, smiling at the astonishment and sudden violence of the worthy old traveller, “ why I'm sure there's nobody that comes to this house that is so welcome as you, nor that master thinks so much of, and

there's nothing to be had for love or money that he would think too good to be got for you, sir, if he knew beforehand; but you know, sir, that you always order a roast duck stuffed with onions on coming in this journey, and it is done, and just put under the cover there."

"O! duck and onions to the dogs!" cried the old traveller; "I tell you they are never to be named in company with a jolly haunch like this, eh! I smelt it the moment I entered the yard. No, no! none of your ducks nor drakes neither, this is the joint for me, and so I'm with you precisely at three."

"I'm very sorry, sir!" said Mary, looking very queer, "but I'm afraid it can't be—I'm afraid you'll be disappointed."

"Phoh, phoh! what can have possessed the wench! I tell you on this haunch I mean to dine, and if three's the hour what is to hinder me? O! you'll say, 'but there is such a troop of hungry fellows in the house,' that's what you mean, ain't it?—but let me alone for that. Three's the time, don't send it up a moment before, and don't let it be a moment after, and then I am with you as sudden as a shower of rain."

"Well, but you don't understand!" said Mary, half laughing, and half looking very earnest.

"Understand, no! how am I likely to understand any such nonsense;" so away he was going in a hurry to make his first round.

"Stop, stop!" cried the cook, running after him to the door, "you had better understand—you had better understand. It's the Mayor's dinner! It's the corporation dinner! and nobody can dine with him without a special invitation, and a ticket."

"Whew!" cried the old traveller, "O! that's the mystery!

Now wench, thou speakest, why didn't open thy mouth at once. The Mayor? the Corporation? Ay! that's another thing. But yet, why should that matter? Who is this Mayor of yours? What is his name?"

"It's Mr. Flint, sir!"

"O, it's Flint, is it? why then there's no trouble at all, Mary. O, that's all right! Flint, of all fellows in the world!—my cousin Flint. Mary, send up my compliments to Mr. Flint, and tell him that a very near relative of his has just come to town, and will be glad to dine with him to day.—You'll see that done?"

"Certainly sir, if you wish it."

"Exactly; let it be done the moment he comes in; and I shall be back at three to a second."

Away went the old traveller; made his preliminary calls on all his customers, and was not only back, but dressed in his highest style for the honour of dining with the mayor and his corporate brethren. Mary informed him that the landlord himself had conveyed his message to the mayor, and the mayor had expressed his gratification at the prospect of having the company of a near relative from a distance, at dinner. Presently the landlord presented himself, and informed the old traveller that he was desired by his worship the mayor to introduce his relative; that the company had sat down to table, but that a place was reserved for him very near the top of the table, so that he might be near the mayor.

Accordingly, the old gentleman was introduced, and conducted to his place by the landlord, who intimated to his worship that this was his worship's relative, but without giving any name, for that the old gentleman had strictly forbidden, reserving to himself the pleasure of making that announcement. The mayor and his friends received the

traveller with great politeness, which reception he manifested his sense of by a politeness and courtesy of manner equally great. He was speedily seated, and was almost as speedily actively discussing a plateful of the desired haunch, which he pronounced to be superlative. He was not only perfectly at his ease amongst his new friends, but so particularly affable, witty, and obliging, that he soon had all round him in the highest state of merriment and gaiety. The worshipful mayor at the head of the table from time to time cast sundry inquisitive glances at the worthy traveller, as if proud of the figure his relative cut at table, but yet perfectly at a loss to recognise under what degree of relationship the gentleman stood to him. As often as the old traveller caught the eye of the mayor upon him, he acknowledged the attention by the most gracious smile and the most profound bow, which the mayor returned by a smile and a bow equally gracious. When the cloth was drawn, and the wine had circulated pretty freely, and all were growing very jolly and open-hearted, and the old traveller was merrier, wittier, and more diverting than ever—his worship, directing a particularly gracious countenance towards him, said that he was proud of the company of so pleasant and clever a gentleman, and more particularly so, as he understood him to be rather nearly akin to him. He had been endeavouring to recollect who the gentleman was, and he was sure he ought to know; but he was ashamed to say that he really could not call to mind which of his relatives he had the honour to entertain, nor could he even call to mind having ever seen him before. He should be particularly obliged to the gentleman to explain in what degree of relationship they stood to each other, for he believed the gentleman claimed a rather near one."

"Exactly so, your worship," said the traveller; "I have the honour not only to be related to you, but very nearly related indeed. It was precisely on that ground that I presumed to sit down to this table, at which I see with a feeling of pride my near relative occupying so distinguished a place. That we are nearly related, I think I shall in a very few words make apparent. Your name, I think, is Flint?"

"Exactly so;" said the mayor.

"And my name, sir, is—Gunstone!" added the traveller; "and pray what two things can possibly be more closely related?"

The mayor and his friends had wit enough to see the wit of Mr. Gunstone. His explanation was received with a thunder of applause; and the health of Mr. GUNSTONE, the new relative of Mr. FLINT, was drank with three times three. The old traveller told the story of his falling in love with the haunch, and of his scheme to come in for a share of it, at which the whole company were highly delighted. A merrier evening never was spent by the corporation of Coventry, Mr. Gunstone keeping the civic dignitaries in a continual uproar of glee at his droll anecdotes till a late hour; and every one of them joining in demanding a promise from him, that if he ever came to Coventry on the day of any civic feast, he would not fail to make his appearance at it without further invitation.

Such was one of Cousin John's regular stories—the other was of a very different kind. Cousin John it must be recollectcd, was a bachelor, and when he was joked on his not getting married, he professed he had a fear of the gossiping propensities of the ladies; he did not choose, he said, that all the world should know his affairs, which he professed to believe would be the case if two or three women

got together at his fireside; and to give a reason for his belief, he always told the story of

PAUL ELKS, AND THE PACKMAN.

PAUL ELKS was a woodman that worked in the forests of Norway. He was a sober, grave man, of a taciturn humour, and of a sly sarcastic wit. He was little seen in the village where he lived, as he used to set out to his work in the forest at an early hour in the morning—in winter always before it was light, and seldom returned at the same season till it was dark again. He often, indeed, when the weather was stormy, would stay in the forest all night, and sleep in a rude hut that he had raised to take his meals in, or to retire to when it was very wet. Here, with a good log fire and a bundle of fern for a bed, he would remain very contentedly with his great rough dog for days together. His wife, on such occasions, came now and then to bring him his provisions and a change of linen. So Paul Elks lived sometimes for months together in the woods, and often almost without seeing a single individual beside his wife at these occasional visits; for he was sometimes all summer employed in felling and squaring those tall pines that were to be sent to England and other foreign countries. At other times he was busy with the rest of the woodmen, burning charcoal, or procuring pitch by burning one end of the pine trees. On these occasions, though Paul Elks was found to be a man of few words, yet his words were felt to be very pithy and full of matter, when they did come; and he dropped out those quaint, cutting sayings ever and anon, which while they made his fellow-workmen smile, gave them a great opinion of Paul's sense. Close as his disposition was reckoned, yet he was very much liked, because he was always ready to put an end to quarrels by

the ridiculous light he could manage to put the cause of quarrel into by half-a-dozen of his solid, quiet words; and it was observed, that whenever he could be of any use to anybody—when anybody was in trouble and he could help them—there was a satisfaction in his serious manner, and a pleasure in his eyes, that did any one good to see. It was said, other people let their good intentions evaporate in talk, but Paul Elks was the man to seek to when real aid or advice was needed.

"The fact was, that Paul was better known amongst the people in the forest than he was in the village where he lived. In his own house, however, Paul was a very kind, worthy fellow. He delighted to sit in the evening by his fire, and with one child on each knee, and another standing between his legs, and a fourth climbed up into his chair, listening to all that his wife had to tell of the village news. His eldest lad, about ten years old, he used to take with him a good deal into the woods, where he had a little axe for him, and was delighted to listen to his prattle while he himself went on hewing in solemn silence, and see him learn to use his axe like a right expert little woodman.

The worst of it was, that Paul had very little to tell, in return for all his wife's news, and when she had done telling a variety of things, she would say, "And now, Paul, what hast thou to tell me?" Paul had seldom anything more to tell than that he had felled so many trees, and what sort of weather he had had. At other times he would, seeing his wife's curiosity, put on an air of mystery, and pretend that it did not do to tell all that a man knew. On this his wife would remind him that she told him everything, and that it did not become him to be less communicative. "That," said Paul, "is the very thing; thou tells every thing, and so everything that I told thee would pro-

bably be out of doors pretty soon after I was gone." "Nay, nay, Paul," his wife would say, "it is only to me, Paul, that thou shouldst tell things of importance—there should be no secrets between man and wife."

Hereupon Paul would say, with a smile, that he really did believe her to be one of the most prudent women living; but that all women had the character of not being able to keep a secret, and therefore it was best for a man not to tempt them with the trust of anything of importance. Often and often did this subject come up; and sometimes his wife not only vindicated the character of her sex in this respect with great vehemence, but would appeal to her female neighbours for testimony of her correctness. Paul, however, would only smile, and shake his head.

At length it really did appear that Paul had some secret that weighed on him, and that he did actually guard from the knowledge of his wife. Sober and solid as his deportment was ordinarily, it was now fearfully melancholy. Often when he came home he would sit him down in his chair, and gaze straight before him as in a dream. To his wife's anxious inquiries, he returned answers quite away from the question; he seemed to have lost his appetite; he would get up and steal off to bed silently, instead of sitting as he used to do with the children; and yet in the night his wife heard him sighing and groaning in a dreadful way. To all her inquiries and entreaties to let her know what ailed him, he returned only a shake of the head and a very rueful look. Betime in the morning he would creep out of bed, throw on his clothes, and set off to the wood without waiting for his breakfast. When he came back several days after, his despondency seemed still greater, and his wife's anxiety and importunity to be made acquainted with his trouble became incessant, and to any other man would

have been actually overpowering. At length, even Paul began to give way. When his wife had been protesting that he might confide in her as securely as in his own heart, that whatever it was that hung on him should never pass from her; Paul sighed deeply, shook his head two or three times, and said, "Nay wife, it is as much as my life is worth to tell anybody what troubles me; say no more Alice—say no more, it cannot be, so let me bear my burden as I can."

But the more his wife saw that there was really something very awful on her husband's mind, the more—as was natural—became her restless anxiety and importunity to be made acquainted with it. She vowed that let her only share his anxiety, and she would pledge her life that she never revealed the matter to any living creature.

"Well," said Paul, "if thou wilt know what is happened, it must even be so; but remember—I put my life in thy hands. The fact is—I have killed a packman!"

"Killed a packman!" exclaimed his wife with horror, "Paul, Paul, what should induce thee to do such a horrible deed?"

"What indeed," said Paul, "but the contents of his pack and the instigation of the devil. But I can tell thee no more, than that I saw the packman crossing the forest, heavily laden, and looking cautiously about him as he went, as if his pack contained something very valuable, and the thought no sooner came into my head, than I up with my axe, and knocked him down. But so struck with the horrid nature of my own act was I immediately, that instead of even looking into the pack, I instantly buried pack and packman together,—and there they are! But if the very telling thee of this thing so affects thee, how wilt thou ever be able to keep the secret? I consider that now I have put

my neck into the noose, and I shall look from this hour upon myself as a dead man."

"Never need thee fear for me, Paul," said his wife; but Paul shook his head sorrowfully, grasped her hand very hardly, and set out to the forest.

Scarcely had he disappeared over the next hill, than all his worst fears were realized. His wife, overcome by her terror and grief, hastened into the next cottage to confide in the bosom of her most intimate and faithful friend the dreadful secret. She extorted a vow of inviolable faith from her friend—told her that what she was about to confide to her, involved the life of her husband and the safety or ruin of them all. Her friend protested that nothing should tear the momentous secret from her bosom when once entrusted to it by her friend. Paul's wife related his confession, again demanding and again being assured of her fidelity; but so tremendous was the communication, that scarcely was Paul's wife gone, than her friend found it too awful for her mind to bear, and rushed out to seek relief and consolation from another dear friend. What need I say more? before the sun set, every woman in the village was in possession of the secret—and before he rose the next morning, every man in the village knew it too.

Poor Paul Elks! In the gloomy silence of the forest, as he pursued his labour, his mind was now haunted not merely by the terrors of conscience but by the fears of detection. Ever and anon, he paused from his chopping, and looked round; and sure enough, on the third day, he saw three men approaching, whom he speedily recognised by their dress and arms to be officers of justice!

Paul knew it was no use attempting to escape; for the officers, aware that he was familiar with the woods, had no doubt caused some of their party to approach from different

quarters, and the most probable consequence of shewing a disposition to fly, would be to be shot upon the spot. He therefore sternly awaited their coming up, and was immediately seized and charged with his crime.

"It is no use," said Paul, "attempting to deny it. I knew when I weakly permitted my wife to draw the secret out of me, that I had, in fact, signed my death-warrant. I always said that a woman cannot keep a secret—I am ready to go along with you."

"But," said one of the officers, "before we go, as you do not deny the deed, it will be just as well to shew us where you have buried the unfortunate packman; for I understand it was in this forest that you say he was killed."

"With all my heart," said Paul; "why should I refuse to let you see the grave, when I have determined to confess my crime?"

"Lead the way then," said the officer; and Paul walked on, guarded by the three men with their pistols in their hands. In five minutes they came beneath a pine tree of monstrous size; and Paul, pointing to a stake driven into the ground, said "turn up carefully the turf on the farther side of that stake, and you will soon discover the murdered wretch."

One of the officers, looking narrowly, observed that a sod had recently been laid down, and turned it up with the mattock which he had fetched from Paul's hut for the purpose. "There," cried Paul, looking eagerly down into the hole—"there is the Packman."

"Where?" said the officers.

"There!" said Paul, "in the hole."

"Packman!" said the officer with the mattock—"I see nothing here but a large snail, with his shell on his back."

"And that is the packman that I killed," said Paul, with a comical smile on his face.

"Come, come, Paul Elks," said the officers, "this farce won't do; it does not become a man charged with murder, and it won't pass with us. You have confessed to murdering a packman, and a packman you must find."

"And that is the only murdered Packman," said Paul, bursting out a-laughing, "that you will find in this forest, to my thinking, mister officer; at least it is all that I know of, or that I have confessed to killing; and a right sturdy packman he is, and his pack on his back too!"

"I see! I see!" said the chief officer. "Why, Paul, thou hast made as great fools of us as thou hast of the women. But by the tower of Drontheim, it is a capital joke after all; thy wife was always teasing thee to be trusted with secrets, and thus hast thou proved what a brave keeper of secrets she is. It would serve thee right to keep thee in prison awhile till we made further quest after the packman, just for bringing grave men, like us, all this way on a fool's errand; but, marry! I think we may leave thee to the women in thy own village. They will dust thy jacket for thee, if ever thou venture there again."

"O!" said Paul, "I shall venture; I have the laugh on my side. They may rate me for shewing them up; but at least I shall hear no more bother about secrets. And if anybody has occasion to take care of his own neck, let him remember the Packman, and keep his own counsel."



CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

OUR boyish days are over! Will Middleton, as hinted in the early part of this history, is at this period of it, having now left school, treading the crowded streets of London, or, seated in the solemn rooms of an ancient building of that great city, studying the first principles of a learned profession, which his parents fondly hope is one day to yield him both wealth and honour; but many a time do his thoughts flee away from the swarms of strangers and the stupid dulness of brick walls that surround him, to those happy fields, where his happy early years flew so

lightly away. Now he is tracing the fragrant windings of banks and hedges, green with spring leaves and gay with spring flowers, peeping into birds' nests—now he is running after cowslips, or busy in the hay field—now in the ardour of play on the village green; or roaming the autumn woods, with all the wild winds and eddying leaves around him;—and wherever he is, in whatever engaged, there, too, are his old cronies, Joe Garner, Cris Newton, Tom Smith, and others of that honest, ragged troop of urchins. Alas! not one of these faithful fellows is now any more at liberty to run about the fields or play on the green than Will Middleton is himself. They are all “gone ‘prentice.” They are all bound fast to stern masters, who give them too much work to allow them to have much play. They are getting sober and mannish, and growing up into those plodding creatures that so many poor men are and must be. Like the foals that they used to see lying stretched out by the side of their dams on the sunny grass, or rising up and gamboling all round them, they have done with all their “gamboling and gamphaleering;” they have got their necks into the collar, and must wear the harness of hard labour all their days.

Yet to me they are and always will be, lads—the very same, as young and as gamesome as ever. How often do I see them, as I used to do, carrying a huge ladder, on a summer's evening, all round the village, to examine the eaves of every house for sparrows' nests; and then up to the church, too, where we were sure to find a-many. How often do I think of the merriment with which we used to climb the winding stairs of that grand old church tower—for a grand one it was for so simple a village—taking advantage of the ringers being in the belfry. That was a perfect climax of wonders! First, there were the ringers.

pulling away at long ropes that went up through holes in the floor above, and then came running down again, with a shaggy kind of something in one place for the ringers to take hold by; and all the while overhead the bells jangling and jumbling and rumbling in such a manner that we wondered how they could ever sound abroad, out of doors, in any regular time. Then, as we ascended, we came to where the huge bells, amid huge wheels, were swinging to-and-fro with a deafening roar of sound, that made the old tower rock and tremble again; and then, out we emerged on the very top of the tower, and saw the village far below us, and the people looking no bigger than crows, and the prospect of the country—for the church stood on a hill—lying all round us in a vastness that amazed us. There, on the lead of the tower, were cut the marks of the feet of many generations of the rude forefathers of the hamlet, and there we duly cut and recorded ours.

That old church and churchyard were a scene of continual pleasure to us. There were no locked-up gates and obstructions in those days. There we found a delightfully dry place for playing at marbles on the pavement of the footpath. There we used to run to witness rustic *weddings*, happy if we could squeeze ourselves in with the gay party and see the ceremony. There we ran too, as eagerly, to witness a funeral. Old skulls, and old brown bones, scattered on the brown earth of re-opened graves—what were they to us but matters of solemn curiosity?—What were death and decay in our minds but far-off things that we had very little concern in? Our enjoyment was to hear the solemn bell tolling for the distant funeral train—to catch the first glimpse of that train coming over the nearest hill—to catch the first sound of the chanted psalm—to see the sober train bearing the paled coffin awfully along

while the whole village turned out to see it go past, and to doff hats and stand reverently as it went past—to say unfeignedly, “God rest his soul!” and then to follow to the grave, and stand round drinking in the thousand-times-heard words of the funeral service with a look of unearthly gravity and a feeling of edification. So stood the old people—but our pleasure was to see the parson come walking out of the church in his surplice, with his book in hand, saying in a grave and measured voice, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!” and then take our seats in the church while that part of the service was performed; and then to get good places near the grave, so that we might see the clergyman’s face, and hear distinctly what seemed to us the very highest of the sublime: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.”

The sound of those church bells is often in my ears, or rather in my heart. I seem to hear them, as we used to hear them, chiming merrily afar off to where we were in the fields; for there was a ring of five bells, and very musical ones too—or as we used to hear them break out with a sudden burst and clash as it were of rejoicing clamour of a Sunday morning; or as I have sate on a Sunday afternoon in some sunny croft, or lain under the orchard tree, when the whole air was full of their murmur of holy music—a tremulous tide of joyous harmony—a solemn *sough* and triumphing, as it were, of grave but happy sounds, like a million of heavenly voices mingling in their joy. Nobody can know but those who have grown in their early years in a similar spot of rural peace and happiness, the effect of a memory which comes often across me by some accidental bell-tone—what a stream of warm

affections it calls up for persons and things that are now gone—or to me the same as gone, for ever;—and yet what a thankfulness, that throughout our beloved country there are thousands of sweet and retired spots that have yielded as much genuine happiness as that did, and are as dear to numberless hearts as that place is to mine.

But as I have already said, the term of the Country Boy's Life is finished,—he is a boy no longer, and therefore this book must also come to

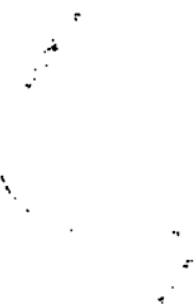
THE END.



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